

**T H E  
C H U R C H - M E M B E R ' S  
D I R E C T O R Y ;**

**O R, A  
G O S P E L C H U R C H D E S C R I B E D :  
W H E R E I N I S C O N S I D E R E D I T S  
F O R M, F O U N D E R, a n d F O U N D A T I O N.**

**A S A L S O**

**The M A T E R I A L S with which it is built. — The  
W o r k a n d S e r v i c e thereof. — The O F F I C E R S  
b e l o n g i n g t o i t, — t h e i r C h a r a c t e r s, Q u a l i f i c a t i o n s,  
a n d D u t i e s. — I n w h o m t h e R I G H T o f c h o o s i n g  
t h e m, a n d t h e P O W E R o f a d m i t t i n g M e m b e r s i s  
v e s t e d. — T h e M E T H O D o f t h e i r A d m i s s i o n, —  
a n d t h e G R O U N D o f C H U R C H - A U T H O R I T Y  
f o r E x c o m m u n i c a t i o n.**

**T O W H I C H I S A D D E D,**

**A B R I E F R E V I E W o f t h e M o r a l a n d R e l i g i o u s  
O b l i g a t i o n s o f C H U R C H - M E M B E R S,**

**A N D**

**A S H O R T A D D R E S S t o a l l w h o i n t e n d e n t e r i n g  
u p o n t h a t I M P O R T A N T C H A R A C T E R.**

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**By A R C H I B A L D B E L L.**

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**L O N D O N : P R I N T E D.**

**Sold by E. J O H N S O N, Ave-maria-Lane, Ludgate-  
Street; W. D A V E N H I L L, N<sup>o</sup> 19, Cornhill, and  
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THE  
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DIRECTOR

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TO THE  
CHURCH OF CHRIST

MEETING IN  
WHITE-ROW, SPITALFIELDS,

LONDON:

CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,

**I** SHALL not attempt to apologize for the Liberty I presume to take, in dedicating the following Piece to you, as a Congregational Church; since, I trust, the spiritual Connection in which I stand related to you, will sufficiently evince the Propriety thereof.

iv D E D I C A T I O N.

I cannot omit mentioning, however, one Circumstance which gave additional Force to my Design in publishing the Second Part of this DIRECTORY, — which was, the repeated Solicitations of our late much honored and sincerely regretted Pastor, the Reverend Mr. EDWARD HITCHIN, who saw the Manuscript, and was pleased to express himself favorably concerning it,

Trusting that your Candor will incite you to peruse it, without indulging any trifling Criticisms, — and engage you to keep in View the PRINCIPAL Design, and not the MERE Execution, I send it forth under your Protection. If there be any Thing worthy your Regard and Acceptance,  
give



## DEDICATION.    v

give the Praise to Him, who is the Author of every good and perfect Gift; — If there should be any Thing you may think improper or needless, generously pardon him, who ever wishes to be open to Conviction, while he has the Honor to subscribe himself, your

*affectionate Brother*

*in the Gospel,*

A. BELL.

*Aldgate,* LONDON.

P R E

THE BIBLE

And the friends who in the  
And for every good and perfect  
Gift shall there be any thing  
you may think iniquity or  
generously pardon him who ever  
wishes to be open to correction  
while he has the power to  
himself your

THE BIBLE

THE BIBLE

THE BIBLE

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## P R E F A C E.

5 **W**HEN I reflect upon the different Subjects of the following Sheets; and more especially on that Part which immediately relates to CHURCH GOVERNMENT, I am very sensible I subject myself to the Censures of many who differ from me in Opinion. Some may be induced to construe my Attempt to instruct Professors in, — or animate them to their Duty, as the Fruit of Ignorance and Presumption, — or the Effect of Vanity and Pride.

But



*But were we always to suppress our pure Designs to communicate Knowledge to the Ignorant and Unthinking, — or prevented in our Wishes to stimulate the supine and careless to the Performance of religious Services and Obligations, by such Considerations as these, seldom should we see Pieces of the following Complexion and Tendency, make their Appearance in the World: And thus Persons on one Hand, might grope in the dark, merely for the Want of a small Taper, — or, on the other, recline undisturbed on the Couch of sensual Pleasure, for Want of a gentle Hint. — Under the divine Blessing, even a small Taper may emit so much Light as to preserve a Man from falling; — or a gentle Hint, may be so far prevalent, as to awaken him from his false Security. If either, or both, of these should be the happy Effects of this Publication, I shall not regard the Sarcaſm of the uncandid Critic, — or the more malevolent Efforts of the Infidel, to disparage this sincere Attempt to spread vital Religion.*

*Leav-*

# P R E F A C E. ix

*Leaving the Event of the present Publication in the Hands of Providence, conscious to myself, in whatever I may have been mistaken, I have not wilfully shut my Eyes against the Truth,—or obtruded Sentiments upon the World, which I never firmly believed, with a View to mislead and perplex the Minds of others,—I shall mention a few Particulars concerning the Design and Reasons of this CHURCH-MEMBER'S DIRECTORY.*

*That Part of it which directly respects CHURCH GOVERNMENT, was principally intended as a Help to those who have neither Opportunity of perusing larger Works,—nor Abilities for following many Writers through Mazes of abstruse Reasonings; in which, perhaps, few Subjects have more generally abounded, than the present; and many Particulars have been unwarrantably introduced and blended with the Controversy, that have not had the least Foundation in, or Connection with it. A Circumstance, of which some Persons have complained, and with no small Degree of Propriety.*

b

*This*

## P R E F A C E.

*This Error, therefore, I have studiously avoided, without partially adhering to the Judgment of any particular Writer, — and with my Eye directed to the Holy Scriptures, and to their divine Author, for Instruction, I have endeavored to form my Sentiments of a GOSPEL CHURCH, and its DISCIPLINE.*

*When we consider how little this Subject, though so interesting, is known and understood by DISSENTERS in general, it cannot but be greatly lamented; and one Reason, why the Interests of that Body have not still more flourished, will here in some Measure appear.*

*If in any SOCIETY whatever, the Principles thereof are not clearly understood, — or the Basis of its Incorporation and Union is not properly known, we cannot justly wonder at the Members being frequently unbinged in their Opinions, if not entirely nonplussed by the plausible Reasonings of Persons of a different Sect, more solidly grounded in the Principles they profess.*

*Men,*



# P R E F A C E. xi

*Men, in common, are sooner captivated by Appearances, than Realities. — A Sentiment artfully conveyed, will frequently influence more than real Argument. Hence, it is, that many who differ from the ORDER of CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES, have speciously attempted to set forth the Antiquity, Credit, and vast Extent of that Form of Church Government which they espouse; and have substituted vague and insufficient Reasons, in the Place of solid Proof, when defending the superior Excellence of their Establishment.*

*In every capital Dispute of this Nature, trifling Subterfuges have been almost invariably introduced; and when Persons have not been able by fair Argument, to maintain and defend their Point, they have ever aimed to screen themselves by this fallacious Method. Instead of Scripture History and Records, human Tradition has been urged, with little short of canonical Authority; and the positive Opinion of antient Divines, introduced in the Room of Apostolic Injunctions.*

*Without impertinently reflecting on either the Character and Abilities of others, I presume the surest and most rational Way for a plain and common Understanding, in order to decide upon this, or any other religious Subject, for himself, is, to attend to the express Language of divine Revelation; and if this be accompanied with earnest Prayer for Wisdom and Direction, he cannot fail in attaining to as much Knowledge, as is necessary and consistent with his Situation.*

*The more illiterate Part of Mankind, (with Respect to Things of the present Life) which in Proportion compose the greatest Number of Professors, ought to be carefully instructed in the Truth; and their Judgments enlightened in the fundamental Principles of Religion, as well as the Great and Opulent, — since God hath chosen the foolish Things of the World, to confound the wise; and the weak Things of the World to confound the Things which are mighty; and base Things of the World, and Things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and Things, which are not, to bring*

bring to Nought Things that are:\* — *And all for this End; That no Flesh should glory in his Presence.*

*Men are neither BORN Dissenters, nor Members of the Established Church; and what they are by Baptism, ceases, when they arrive to Years of mature Understanding. When Providence therefore spares a Person to that Period of Life, and does not furnish him with Abilities to enter into the deep Disputes of the learned Theologist; and he is unable to collect and digest the Sense of Scripture, on many Points so satisfactorily as he could wish, how shall he be assisted in determining for himself? — Surely not by perusing Metaphysicians! — Such would rather confuse, than aid him in settling his Judgment. With Views therefore particularly directed to such, I drew up the following plain and familiar Treatise; — others whose Faculties and Genius are more penetrating and comprehensive I leave and advise to read Productions more copious and elaborate.*

\* 1 Cor. i. 27, 28, 29.



*As to the Second Part, which respects Practical Religion, and peculiarly points out what Manner of Persons CHURCH-MEMBERS ought to be in all Holy Conversation,\* I shall only observe, I conceived, after having considered the spiritual Building, and its solemn Services, it could by no Means be deemed incompatible with the Nature of the Subject, to point out some of the more extraordinary Obligations under which they are laid, by the important Character they sustain, as MEMBERS of CHRIST'S VISIBLE CHURCH.*

*I know many conscientious Persons have a strong Objection to Pieces of this Kind, apprehending they lead to Legality. However true this may be of some recent Publications, under a similar Title, the Reader will here see that I have cautiously omitted every Expression and Idea, that has had any natural Tendency to this End.*

*Others again, object to such Pieces, because they say, it argues a Supposition that the*

\* 2 Pet. iii. 11.

*Holy Scriptures are not a sufficient Guide or Directory of themselves. This Objection is hardly worth answering. It can never be properly considered as implying a Defect in the Divine Word, when all the Arguments to perswade, and the Motives to allure to the Practice of vital Religion, are drawn from thence; — May we not be permitted to examine a Golden Mine, without injuring its valuable Ore, — or may we not open a Casket, without prejudicing its Jewels. — And may we not be allowed to search into the Spirit and Meaning of Revelation, as well as view and improve the Sense of many great and precious Promises, without injuring the sacred Scriptures. — Surely we may!*

*I have concluded the whole with a short Address to those Persons who have a View of entering into Church Communion, as I apprehend, this Publication may occasionally fall into the Hands of such; and when we reflect how precipitately many seriously disposed Persons, in the Warmth of their Affection,*  
enter

*enter into Christian Fellowship, — while others, through unjustifiable Fears, refrain from attending to this Branch of their Duty, as Christians, I hope it will not be thought an unnecessary Addition. That the God of all Grace, Mercy, and Peace, may attend the present Design with his Blessing, is the fervent Prayer of the*

AUTHOR.



**THE**  
**CHURCH MEMBER'S**  
**DIRECTORY, &c.**

**T**HE Constitution of a GOSPEL CHURCH is a Subject highly worthy of every Christian's Consideration; though too lightly esteemed now by many Professors. No Person can justify himself in dissenting from a national Establishment, unless he can produce some Scripture Reasons for refusing Communion with her: A little Reflection will most assuredly convince every thinking Man, that it behoves him always to be able to give a Reason of the Hope that is in him.

Surely Dissenters do not separate from the established Church from a schismatical Disposition, or with a View to answer any party Designs. No, God forbid! We have ever found Dissenters warm and zealous Advocates of a truly Protestant Government; and invariably strenuous to promote Peace and Harmony among professing Christians in the Establishment, whenever their own Consciences

were not likely to be wounded, or any Injury done to that Gospel they believe in for Salvation.

But as they have separated, and profess to form themselves into religious Bodies, upon Scripture Grounds, for the pure Worship of God, without any Mixture of Creature Fancy, I shall attempt, as briefly as possible, to shew what, in general, constitutes a Gospel Church,—consider its Form, Founder, and Foundation,—the Materials with which it is built,—the Work and Service thereof,—the Officers belonging to it, their Characters, Qualifications, and Work,—the Right of choosing them,—in whom the Power of admitting Members is vested,—the Method of their Admission;—and the Ground of a Church's Authority for Excommunication.

I. *First*, To consider what is to be understood by a GOSPEL CHURCH, and the particular FORM of it.

1. A Gospel Church signifies a “certain Number of Persons,” who, being happily delivered from their Misery by Nature, and enabled to believe in the Lord *Jesus Christ* as the only Saviour, bow and submit to Him as their only spiritual Lord, rejoice in Him as their chief Good, and *commit the keeping of their Souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator*;<sup>1</sup>—convinced that it is their Privi-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. iv. 19.

lege, as well as Duty, to associate together, they, as *one Body*, engage in the most solemn Manner, in the Presence, and by the Blessing of God, to walk before Him, and with each other, in the constant Exercise of every Christian Grace, and in the faithful Discharge of every moral Obligation: They agree to assemble on stated and occasional Seasons for the Worship of God, and the Help of each others Faith and Patience; *So that we ourselves glory in you in the Churches of God, for your Patience and Faith in all your Persecutions and Tribulations that ye endure.*<sup>1</sup>

The Apostle *Paul*, in his Epistle to the *Colossians*, exhorts them to be constant in *Christ*; and as an Argument thereto, having first told them, that *In Him are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge*,<sup>2</sup> has this striking Sentence, *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord so walk ye in Him*.<sup>3</sup> From whence, it evidently appears it was considered as an Act necessary and incumbent for those who had received the Lord, to congregate together, and unite themselves in Church Fellowship; especially as Mention is made in the preceding Verse, of their Order, and Stedfastness of Faith in *Christ*.

A religious Body of People thus united, are distinguished in Scripture by various Appellations, as

<sup>1</sup> 2 *Theff* i. 5. <sup>2</sup> *Coloss.* ii. 3. <sup>3</sup> *Coloss.* ii. 6.



sometimes a CHURCH, *Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints, &c.*<sup>1</sup> Sometimes a HABITATION, *In whom you also are builded together for an Habitation of God through the Spirit.*<sup>2</sup> Sometimes a TEMPLE, *For ye are the Temple of the living God;*<sup>3</sup> All which figurative Expressions, combine to shew, that the assembling or Union together of any particular Number of Christian Believers, (for of such only is the Church composed) are considered in Scripture as a holy Building, in which God is graciously pleased to represent Himself as residing, and accepting their spiritual Oblations: *To whom coming as unto a living Stone, disallowed indeed of Men, but chosen of God and precious, Ye also as lively Stones are built up a spiritual House, an holy Priesthood, to offer up spiritual Sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.*<sup>4</sup>

2. As to the original Form and Constitution of Gospel Churches, it may be proper just to observe, that it was not *national*: This is very evident from Scripture; as also that the Church was not to be supported by the temporal Sword, since *Christ's* Kingdom was not of this World. *Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not of this World. If my Kingdom were of this World then would my Servants fight.*<sup>5</sup> Spiritual Establishments require spiritual Supports only. Be-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 2.<sup>2</sup> Ephes. ii. 22.<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 16.<sup>4</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.<sup>5</sup> John xviii. 36.

fore the clear Dispensation of the Gospel, there was a national Establishment; but when *Christ* came, who was the Glory of the Mosaic Institution, there needed no external Establishments, nor did He order his Church to be endowed, furnished, and protected by civil Authority. His Kingdom being spiritual, whoever would worship him aright, must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. This our Lord Himself declares, in the Conversation He had with the Samaritan Woman, *Jesus saith unto her, Woman believe Me, the Hour cometh when ye shall neither in this Mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father, but the Hour cometh and now is, when the true Worshipers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth.*<sup>1</sup> Besides, we read of several distinct Churches in the Provinces of *Macedonia* and *Galatia*, *Unto the Churches of Galatia, Grace be to you and Peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.*<sup>2</sup> Moreover, *Brethren, we do you, to wit, of the Grace of God bestowed on the Churches of Macedonia,*<sup>3</sup> and it is said in another Place, *Then had the Churches Rest throughout all Judea and Galilee, and Samaria.*<sup>4</sup> As a good Writer observes, “Had the Epistle to the *Galatians*, been addressed to the Church at *Galatia*, as “being made up of many Churches, it would have “spoke that Church to have been national or provincial, but it being unto the Churches of *Gala-*

<sup>1</sup> *John* iv. 21, 23.    <sup>2</sup> *Gal.* i. 2.    <sup>3</sup> *2 Cor.* viii. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Acts* ix. 31.

“*tia*, it speaks just the contrary ; that they were  
 “ independent one of the other, even as the Church  
 “ of *Corinth* did not depend upon the Church at  
 “ *Ephesus*, nor that on any other Church.”

These Testimonies of Scripture amply prove, that they were not national Churches, but separate Assemblies ; Christians joined together by some solemn Covenant or Agreement. This especially appears to be the Case, from *Paul's* Language to the *Corinthians* ; *And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord and unto us by the Will of God.*<sup>1</sup> From whence we see, that those who were converted to the Faith of the Gospel, esteemed it an indispensable Duty to enter into a spiritual Connection with the Followers of *Christ*, as soon as they had first made a Surrender of themselves to the Lord, which was but their reasonable Service. When *Paul* was brought to a Knowledge of the Truth, we find he was likewise so disposed ; and under an influence of its Importance, it is declared, *That he essayed to join himself unto the Disciples.*<sup>2</sup> They at first hesitated to receive him, knowing him to have been a violent Persecutor of the Churches of *Christ*, but, upon the Credit of *Barnabas*, who gave them a succinct Relation of his miraculous Conversion, they most chearfully admitted him. I might here remark the Instances we have of the Church's not

<sup>1</sup> 2 *Cor.* viii. 5.      <sup>2</sup> *Acts* ix. 26.



receiving any, but such Persons as they had good Evidence to believe were savingly instructed in divine Things: But this will more properly come under another Branch.

That the real Form of Gospel Churches was originally congregational, we need only refer to a few Texts, *And all that believed were together.*<sup>1</sup> *And when they had prayed, the Place was shaken where they were assembled together.*<sup>2</sup> *And they were all with one Accord in Solomon's Porch.*<sup>3</sup> Whoever reads the last cited Chapter, will see the peculiar and special Blessing which crowned their Meeting, by an Addition to the Church of "*Multitudes both of Men and Women.*"

Some have entered into an Enquiry, how many Persons are necessary to form a Gospel Church; but this is of so trifling a Nature as to need no great Enlargement. A Gospel Church cannot consist of more than can conveniently meet together in one Place, and equally join in the Observance of every divine Institution; for how can there be any Kind of Order or Harmony in that Church, where the Body of People (not merely Meeting for Worship, but) actually joined in a solemn Compact, as sanctified Persons, or separated ones, is so very large, that the Ordinances cannot be possibly administered to

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 44.

<sup>2</sup> Acts iv. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Acts v. 12.

them

them at the same Season. In Christian Communion, it is essential that every Member participate of the same Privileges, and join in the same religious Services, at the same Time ; and not for some of the Members to sit down at the Table of the Lord, or engage in any other divine public Institution, one Sabbath, and some the next ;—which must unavoidably be the Case, where the Members are too considerable to assemble in one Place. Here, indeed, we are called upon to exercise our Reason : Prudence, Circumstances, and the Well-being of a Community, must determine what Number of Persons is necessary to constitute any certain Gospel Church, since Scripture is totally silent on this Head, nor does it appear absolutely important ; in as much as many Particulars tend to make it more convenient and orderly to admit a larger Number of converted Persons into Communion with some Churches, than with others.

This evidently appears, if we consider the Nature of a Gospel Church as a HOUSEHOLD or Family, *Now therefore*, says the Apostle, *ye are no more Strangers and Foreigners but Fellow-Citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God.*<sup>1</sup> How disagreeable would it be for Families not to sit down together at their respective Meals, and converse with each other on the Beneficence of their bountiful Creator, in the

<sup>1</sup> *Ephes.* ii. 19.

Bestowment of temporal Favors ? &c.<sup>1</sup> But how much more repugnant, both to Communion and Order, would it be for a Church not to be able, from the Largeness of its Numbers, to join together in commemorating their Lord's Death and Resurrection, but to succeed each other in this or other public solemn Services : Thus the very Nature of Communion would be destroyed. Persons might, with equal Propriety, run from Church to Church, and desire occasional Communion with Strangers.

The Members of a Church of *Christ* are to worship God as a collective Body, and not as individual Believers ; they are at one Time and with one Voice (if Necessity prevent not) to praise God *With one Mind, and one Mouth glorify God,*<sup>1</sup> says the inspired Apostle. But this cannot be, where the Body of People forming a Church, are prevented meeting in the same Place by the Greatness of their Numbers.

Besides, how can a regular Process be pursued against any Member walking disorderly, when the Members are so very numerous ? there can be none : And so the Apostle's Injunction is of no Avail, where he instructs Churches how to proceed in such a Case, *In the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ when ye are gathered together, &c.*<sup>2</sup> What ! gathered together, when the Members cannot assemble in one Place ! an Absurdity. But it is needless to add any more on

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xv. 16.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. v. 4.



this Point. A Gospel Church is a spiritual Family, and a Family ought ever to be orderly and consistent in all its Proceedings.

II. *Secondly*, Let us consider the FOUNDER of this spiritual and holy Building, a GOSPEL CHURCH.

The FOUNDER is God himself: This is clearly and fully evinced by the sacred Oracles, *In whom you also are builded together for an Habitation of God through the Spirit.*<sup>1</sup> Observe, *through the SPIRIT*; not by Men, not by Popes, nor Principalities, whose Humor or Prejudices might induce them either to erect or destroy, just as they pleased. Were they not founded and built by God's Spirit, what awful Churches should we have! Men, insatiable of Power, arrogate to themselves an Authority with which they were never vested by *Christ*; and having been the sole Formers of Churches, have attempted to usurp and exercise Dominion over Mens Consciences; a Character, at which the Apostle *Peter* seems to start back, and tremble on the mentioning; and therefore he exhorts those who had the principal Charge of the Churches throughout *Pontus, Galatia*, and other Provinces, that they would not *lord it over God's Heritage*, but rather to be *Examples to the Flock.*<sup>2</sup> The Holy Spirit is likewise spoken of as appointing Overseers in this Gospel

<sup>1</sup> *Ephes. ii. 22.*

<sup>2</sup> *1 Pet. v. 3.*

Church, *Take Heed therefore to yourselves and to all the Flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you Overseers*; <sup>1</sup> so that the Officers, as well as the Building, evidently appear to be primarily of God. Indeed it is called the *Church of the Living God*, and the *House of God*: <sup>2</sup> Expressive of his being the Founder of, as well as of his Residence in it. They are also called *Churches of Christ*. <sup>3</sup>

The Spirit of God is said, in another Place, to prepare and qualify the Materials for this Building. Referring to this Church, he adds, *That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of Water by the Word*. <sup>4</sup> And when our Lord is speaking of *Peter's* Confession, he assumes the Character and Office of a Builder; *And upon this Rock will I build my Church*; and the continual Additions which are made to this Church, are likewise attributed to God, *And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved*. <sup>5</sup>

But not only do distinct Societies, incorporated for Divine Worship, appear to be of God, because He is the Builder; but likewise as He is pleased to magnify his Name, manifest his Presence, and express his Pleasure in them — and to which He has given many precious and animating Promises for

<sup>1</sup> *Acts* xx. 28.    <sup>2</sup> *1 Tim.* iii. 15.    <sup>3</sup> *Rom.* xvi. 16.  
<sup>4</sup> *Ephes.* v. 26.    <sup>5</sup> *Mat.* xvi. 18.    <sup>6</sup> *Acts* ii. 47.

their Direction, Support and Encouragement; *Here will I dwell, for I have desired it.*<sup>1</sup> God is known in *her Palaces for a Refuge.*<sup>2</sup> *How fair and pleasant art thou O Love for Delights!*<sup>3</sup> *For the Lord hath chosen Zion, He hath desired it for his Habitation.*<sup>4</sup> God is likewise represented as resting in this Church, *This is my Rest for ever.*<sup>5</sup> And He is spoken of as making Choice of this Church, in Preference to any Superstructures the Heathens could raise. *For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for his peculiar Treasure.*<sup>6</sup> The Names of *Jacob* and *Israel* are very frequently used to intimate the Church, and therefore may here most properly be applied; since in a Verse or two before, David is speaking of the House and of the Courts of the Lord.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps some may object to the Application of these Promises to a Gospel Church, and say, that they were originally made to the *Jewish* Church, and therefore are no Proof that particular congregational Churches are of God's Appointment: The Answer is obvious, — all the Promises which were given to the *Jewish* Church, were given with an Allusion to *Christ's* spiritual Church, which was to be established in after Ages. This is expressly confirmed by the Testimony of the Prophet *Isaiab*, who, after

<sup>1</sup> *Psf.* cxxxii. 14.    <sup>2</sup> *Psf.* xlviii. 3.    <sup>3</sup> *Cant.* vii. 6.

<sup>4</sup> *Psf.* cxxxii. 13.    <sup>5</sup> *Psf.* cxxxii. 14.    <sup>6</sup> *Psf.* cxxxv. 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Psf.* cxxxv. 2.



having described the blessed Estate of the *New Jerusalem*, and in a Manner beautifully descriptive, pointed out the glorious Effects of a preached Gospel, represents the Lord as thus speaking, *The Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my Footstool; where is the House which ye build unto Me, and where is the Place of my Rest? For all those Things hath mine Hand made, and all those Things hath been, saith the Lord; but to this Man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my Word.*<sup>1</sup> Thus *Stephen the Martyr*, in his sublime Address to the obdurate *Jews*, *Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands.*<sup>2</sup> Now what can possibly be understood by such a Sentence, if it has not a spiritual Allusion, for God did represent himself as residing in the Temple, and Tabernacle. Thus the Psalmist, in relating the Blessings of *Christ's* spiritual Kingdom, breaks forth into a Kind of evangelical Rapture, *Why leap ye, ye high Hills? this is the Hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever.*<sup>3</sup> So when it is said in another Place, *Sacrifice and Offering thou wouldest not,*<sup>4</sup> it must have a spiritual Signification, since they were his own express Appointments.

Upon the whole, it evidently appears that God's

<sup>1</sup> *Is.* lxvi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Acts* vii. 48.

<sup>3</sup> *Pf.* lxxviii. 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Pf.* cxxxv. 2.

Delight, (to speak after the Manner of Men) is in spiritual Temples, and in spiritual Sacrifices, and to these all the Promises especially pertain. *I dwell in the high and holy Place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble Spirit.*<sup>1</sup> *The Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit, a broken and a contrite Heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*<sup>2</sup> But we have New Testament Authority, and Promises to the same Purpose, and which are quoted with direct Application to particular Churches.—The Apostle *Paul*, exhorting the *Corinthians* to avoid every Species of idolatrous Worship, adds, *What Agreement hath the Temple of God with Idols? For ye are the Temple of the living God. As God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them.*<sup>3</sup> And He is described as walking in the Midst of his seven golden Candlesticks,<sup>4</sup> (or the seven Churches in *Asia*, which were all particular and congregational) hereby denoting his Complacency in them, and his Presence with them. These are glorious and striking Images, and should ever fill the Believer's Mind with the deepest Humiliation, the profoundest Reverence, and the warmest Feelings of Gratitude, whenever he enters the House of the Lord; to think that it is the Residence and Rest of God, the Place and Delight He has chosen: In Fact, that he walks

<sup>1</sup> *Is.* lvii. 15.<sup>2</sup> *Psa.* li. 17.<sup>3</sup> *2 Cor.* vi. 16.<sup>4</sup> *Rev.* i. 13.

in it as in a pleasant garden, *I am come into my Garden, my Sister, my Spouse.*<sup>1</sup>

Another Reason why particular and congregated Churches appear to be of God, is the divine Ordinances which He has most mercifully appointed for their Use: He has not with-held any Thing from them that might have a Tendency to encourage their Hope or strengthen their Faith: But were they contrary to the express Design of Scripture, He certainly would not have given any Orders concerning them by his Servants the Apostles. God is a jealous God, and will not give his Glory to another, *I am jealous for Jerusalem and Zion with a great Jealousy.*<sup>2</sup> He hath given to his Church the Seals of the new Covenant, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. These are two precious and delightful Testimonies of his Love. The first designed as a Figure of that Newness of Life which all his People are to be possessed of, in Order to their properly being Members of his Church or mystical Body: The latter holding forth to our View the super-abounding Riches of his Grace in our Salvation.

That these Ordinances were given to particular Churches, will appear by attending to their Institution. *And as they were eating, Jesus took Bread and blessed it, and brake it; and gave it to his Disciples,*

<sup>1</sup> Cant. v. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Zach. i. 14. viii. 2.



(for none others were admitted) *and said, take, eat, this is my Body, &c.*<sup>1</sup> Here *Jesus* himself gave his Disciples, who were the first Members of a New Testament Church, the Ordinance of his Supper; which He would not have done, had their social Meetings for religious Service and Worship been contrary to his Will. The Institution of Baptism was likewise in Favor of such congregated Bodies; and the Ordinance was not administered to any adult Persons, but such as gave Evidence of their Conversion, *And they that gladly received his Word were baptised.*<sup>2</sup> As in this, so in other Instances, we read of those who were thus baptised immediately joining the Churches, which they could not have done, unless they had submitted to that Ordinance; so that Baptism apparently appears an absolute pre-requisite to a Person's Admission into a Gospel Church.

Under the old Dispensation, the Lord discovered his Approbation of his People's Assemblies, and of the Building being his own, and by his particular Direction raised, in giving a Display of his visible Glory; and more especially upon extraordinary Occasions. When the Tabernacle was commanded to be reared, and *Aaron* and his Sons to be anointed, it is said, *That the Glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.*<sup>3</sup> Thus, upon the grand and solemn Dedic-

<sup>1</sup> *Mat.* xxvi. 26.    <sup>2</sup> *Acts* ii. 41. xviii. 8.    <sup>3</sup> *Exod.* xl. 34.

cation of the Temple, God manifested his Pleasure therein, thereby affording incontestible Evidence that it was erected by his positive Command, *For the Glory of the Lord had filled the House of the Lord.*<sup>1</sup>

Although the Glory which the Lord manifests in his Gospel, or New Testament Churches, is of a very different Kind from that displayed either in the Tabernacle or Temple, yet it is no less expressive of his Divine Approbation, and as incontrovertibly evinces them to be of his own Institution. The Glory of the one was external and visible, the other is of a secret and spiritual Nature. The one was a resplendent Glory, or effulgent Brightness, filling the holy Building, the other is an internal Evidence of the Spirit, who by his blessed Influences and divine Operations, affords just and rational Grounds to conclude the Lord is present on certain Seasons. There is, indeed, this Difference between the two Glories; the Old Testament Glory was seen of every Person within the Walls, the latter is only discerned and experienced by those who have an Interest in the Covenant, and to whom the Lord manifests Himself, as He does not unto the World.<sup>2</sup> As a Proof of this, review that remarkable Account which is given of the Descent of the Holy Ghost. *And when the Day of Pentecost was come, they were all with one Accord in one Place.*<sup>3</sup> This is an Instance of

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings viii. 14.    <sup>2</sup> John xvi. 21.    <sup>3</sup> Acts ii. 1.

their joining together as a congregational Church, and is of itself a sufficient Authority for Christians to form themselves into larger or smaller Societies for the Worship of God, and to wait together in Expectation of his Presence and Blessing.

What was the Consequence of the Apostles thus assembling? It is added, *And suddenly there came a Sound from Heaven as of a mighty rushing Wind, and it filled all the House where they were sitting.*<sup>1</sup> By perusing the following Verses, it appears, that all did not properly perceive or understand the Glory of this spiritual House, equal to those who had ocular Demonstration of the Glory of the *Jewish Church*, For it is said, *And they were all amazed and were in Doubt, saying, one to another, What meaneth this?* Even the devout *Jews*, who assembled upon the Report of this wonderful spiritual Phenomenon, and who were Witnesses of its amazing Effects, with the rest of the People, understood it not.

Although we are not to expect such extraordinary Effusions of the Holy Spirit now, that Instance being especially designed by God as a Specimen of the Fulfilment of that Promise, *And it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all Flesh, and your Sons and your Daughters shall prophesy, your old Men shall dream Dreams, your young Men shall see*

*Acts ii. 2.*

<sup>2</sup> *Acts ii. 12.*

*Visions,*



*Visions, and also upon the Servants and upon the Hand-maids in those Days will I pour out my Spirit,*<sup>1</sup> yet we have abundant Reason to expect his benign Influences and glorious Operations in a less Degree, since he is promised “to take of the Things of *Christ* and shew “them unto his People.”<sup>2</sup> By the Things of *Christ* here spoken of, is to be understood *Christ*’s Suitableness as to his Person, Work, and Offices, with every Thing else relative to the Soul’s compleat Salvation. The Lord thus condescending to give Discoveries of his spiritual Glory in the Assemblies of his People, indubitably proves their congregating together, to be agreeable to his Will, and confirms the various Promises I have just been reciting.

Surely none will presume to say, that the Lord would ever deign to grant a Sight of his Grace and Glory, Tastes of his Love and Presence, Assurances of his Favor and eternal Life, in that House or spiritual Building, which was raised (with Respect to Fundamentals) contrary to his Will, or in Opposition to his Gospel: on the other Hand, none surely will be so abandoned as to assert, that such professed Experiences of God’s Glory are the trifling Fruits of Fancy, or the mere Produce of an enthusiastic Brain. Scripture gives ample Testimony of such divine Discoveries, and the Example I have now quoted (was there no other) would support the As-

<sup>1</sup> *Joel* ii. 28, 29.<sup>2</sup> *John* xvi. 14.

sertion. But I will not disturb the Mind of the Reader, or mis-spend Time, by answering such atheistical Gainsayings.

Upon the whole, it is clearly proved that the original of all Gospel Churches was from God, that their Continuance is by his Power, and the Blessings they receive are his gracious Bestowment—from the first Call of his Spirit to the full Assurance of Faith; and that it is He alone maintains the divine Work from the primæval Acts of Faith and Hope here, to the full Vision and Fruition in Glory. *Praise the Lord all ye his Saints !*

III. *Thirdly*, Let us now view the FOUNDATION of this GOSPEL CHURCH.

It is apparent from Scripture, that not *Peter*, but *Christ* himself was the Foundation of this spiritual Superstructure. The poor, ignorant, and no less infatuated *Papists* are sadly mistaken, when they lay *Peter* as the Foundation of their idolatrous Church. He was the most unlikely Apostle (one should naturally suppose) they could have fixed on as a Base; for the Foundation of a Building should be the most solid, and least liable to shake or give Way. A Defect in any other Part, may possibly be easily rectified, but it is more than probable the whole Building must totter and fall, if there be any capital Defect in its Foundation.

dition. Now *Peter* was sooner shaken, according to the Scripture Account, than any other of the Apostles. Indeed, they have a little, though but small, Encouragement for their chusing him; they have in general, what he had in particular, Zeal, frequently unaccompanied with Knowledge, as witness his Profession of Steadiness to *Christ*,<sup>1</sup> and yet deserting him in his Afflictions;<sup>2</sup> his precipitately cutting off the Soldier's Ear,<sup>3</sup> and presently denying Him to a common Maid-servant.<sup>4</sup>

The Scripture, speaking of *Christ* as the Foundation of his Church, declares, *Behold, I lay in Zion for a Foundation, a Stone, a tried Stone, a precious Corner Stone, a sure Foundation.*<sup>5</sup> An excellent Author observes, that this Text is a Key to that in *Matthew*, *Thou art Peter, and on this Rock will I build my Church.*<sup>6</sup> “The Word *Peter*, says he, in the “Greek, signifies a Stone upon a Rock, and not the “Rock itself; so that it is as if He had said, Thou “art but a Stone upon the Rock; I myself, who “am the Son of the Living God, am the Rock on “which I will build my Church, and the Gates of “Hell shall not prevail against it. So that *Christ* “the Son, and not *Peter* the Disciple, is the Rock “on which this spiritual House is built.”

<sup>1</sup> *John* xiii. 37.    <sup>2</sup> *Mat.* xxvi. 56.    <sup>3</sup> *John* xviii. 10.  
<sup>4</sup> *John* xviii. 17.    <sup>5</sup> *Is.* xxviii. 16.    <sup>6</sup> *Mat.* xvi. 18.  
That



That *Christ* is the only Foundation of his Church, may be clearly illustrated from the parabolical Representation He gives of the Man that built himself a House, as recorded by the Evangelist *Matthew*.<sup>1</sup> In that Place, our Lord has an evident Allusion to Himself as a Rock, a fit Foundation for an immortal Soul to build his Hope upon. Does *Christ*, in this Passage, represent Himself as the Rock of an Individual, and yet let *Peter* be the Rock of his whole Church? God forbid! away with so shocking a Supposition. *Behold, He himself is the chief Corner Stone, elect and precious.*<sup>2</sup>

In comparing those two Texts in *Matthew*, we shall discover a Harmony and peculiar Beauty. The same Ideas are contained, and the same Sense conveyed. In one there is Mention made of a certain Rock on which *Christ* would found his Church: In the other *Christ* declares himself to be the very Rock: In one it is said, "The Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it"; and in the other the Reason is assigned, because it is founded on this Rock, even *Christ*.

In all Ages of the Church, there have been Persons who did not chuse to acknowledge *Christ* as the Foundation, and refused to build upon Him as such: Convinced of this, our Lord, after having discoursed

<sup>1</sup> *Mat. vii. 24.*

<sup>2</sup> *1 Pet. ii. 6.*

upon the Vineyard, or Church, and mentioned the Opposition that would be made to His ministering Servants, puts this important Question, *What is this then that is written? The Stone which the Builders rejected, the same is become the Head of the Corner.*<sup>1</sup> When the Apostle Paul was writing to the Church at Ephesus, he informs them, that they were built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner Stone.<sup>2</sup> Now would any Man wish for a better Foundation, than that on which Persons, who were immediately inspired by God, built their Hopes of eternal Life: I think not. But that Christ, and He alone, is the only Foundation of a Gospel Church, let one more Text suffice; *For other Foundation can no Man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*<sup>3</sup> Let them obliterate this Text, ere they presume to say, that Christ is not the Foundation of his Church. ✓

I might enlarge upon the Nature and constituent Parts of this Foundation; but I think it unnecessary to do more than merely mention them. Prolixity, and a Number of Particulars, tending rather to confuse and embarrass the Reader's Mind, than assist him in settling his Judgment. The four grand Parts therefore of this Foundation are evidently Christ's Obedience, Death, Resurrection, and Intercession;

<sup>1</sup> Luke xx. 17,    <sup>2</sup> Ephes. ii. 20.    <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 11.

and these four Parts are composed of his perfect Fulfilment of both the ceremonial, and moral Law, his Atonement for Sin, his bringing in an everlasting Righteousness, to the Soul's eternal Acquittal from the Demands of Justice, and the Infallibility of his Arrival in Glory, *For He who hath begun the good Work will perform it unto the Day of Christ.*<sup>1</sup> As all these different Parts center in *Christ*, He is emphatically the *Foundation of God.*<sup>2</sup> Oh blessed, oh glorious Foundation! Who can refuse to build upon this Base? None but such who neither know themselves nor the Excellency thereof. May the Lord help you and I, Reader, to rest all our Hope here, and to build on none else, however plausible it may appear to depraved Reason; since Scripture, which is God's Revelation, holds forth no other, on which a lost Sinner may safely build for Eternity. Having endeavored to shew, what in general constitutes a Gospel Church,—its Form,—by whom founded,—and its Foundation, I with equal Plainness proceed;

IV. *Fourthly*, To consider the MATERIALS with which it is built.

No House can be erected without Materials; and such a House as this, and formed by so Divine an

<sup>1</sup> *Philip*. i. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *2 Tim.* ii. 19.



Architect, must most surely be composed of excellent Materials. It cannot be built of unhewn, rough, or unpolished Stones : Such were not even permitted to be put into the Temple of old, which was only a Type of this spiritual Building ; consequently the Stones must be of a peculiar Texture and Beauty : But in Order to satisfy ourselves, let us examine into the Building,

The Building is spiritual, consequently carnal Stones are not fit to be placed in it ; none but regenerated Persons are proper Stones for the raising this Superstructure. It is necessary when a Building is to be erected, that the Stones be properly prepared for it. This was the Case when they erected the Temple, *And the House when it was built, was built of Stones ready prepared for it.*<sup>1</sup> So when a Church of *Christ* is to be raised, it is absolutely necessary that the Persons who are to form Parts of this divine Building, should be renewed Persons ; especially as the Work to be done in this House is spiritual. They must be of those who are called to be Saints, or Persons separated from the Pollutions of the World, 'ere they can be eligible to the Communion of Gospel Churches. And that, not only because the Building and Work is spiritual, but because this House is to be the Residence of *Jehovah*. *I will dwell in them, &c.*<sup>2</sup> Now how can the Lord dwell in any

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings vi. 7.<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 16.

other than an holy Place, when it is said, *Holiness becometh* (or is peculiar to) *thine House, O Lord, for ever.*<sup>1</sup> There can be no real Communion between Persons who delight not in the same Object; and however specious Mens Professions may be, yet if they are not called to be Saints, they will never truly delight in Holiness; it is diametrically opposite to carnal Nature. In Order to real Communion in this House, Persons must be regenerated, or new-born, *For God hath not called us unto Uncleannefs but unto Holiness.*<sup>2</sup> Besides, in the Subjects of this House there must be Unity of Sentiment, as to the Object they love, the Service they perform, and the End they design. Not only so, but the Communion of the Holy Ghost is prayed for by *Paul*, in his Epistle to the *Corinthians*, to be with them as a Church, *And the Communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all, Amen.*<sup>3</sup> Without this Divine Person there can be no real Communion, and as He dwells not in the Hearts of the impure and disobedient, they cannot, while in that State, be proper Persons to be admitted into a Church of *Christ*.

I have often been surprized, at hearing of Churches receiving Persons into their Communion, who only bear a good moral Character, and sometimes hardly that. They cannot, I am persuaded, seriously reflect upon the Absurdity of their Conduct. In the Chapter I just cited, the Reason is

<sup>1</sup> *Psalms* lxxxii. 6.    <sup>2</sup> *1 Thess.* iv. 7.    <sup>3</sup> *2 Cor.* xiii. 14.  
assigned

assigned why the Stones were prepared before they were put into the Temple, *So that there was neither Hammer nor Axe, nor any Tool of Iron heard in the House while it was in Building.*<sup>1</sup> Learn from hence, that Persons are not to join themselves to *Christ's* Church, in Order to be converted, but Conversion is to precede their Admission ; as a Man's Title must be made valid, before he can realize his Estate. Who, when raising an elegant Mansion, would put ordinary Bricks and beautiful Stones together in the same Parts of the Building : None, who had a Concern for Credit and Reputation. — They would certainly endeavour to make it form an agreeable Appearance, as well as build it on a permanent Foundation. Besides, what Symmetry or Proportion can there be between unformed Bricks and polished Stones ? It cannot be said of such an Erection, as was said of *Christ's* real Church, *Thou art beautiful, O my Love, as Tyrzah.*<sup>2</sup>

The Apostle *Paul* in writing to the Church at *Ephesus*, speaks of the Fitness of the different Parts of this spiritual Building ; *All the Building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord.*<sup>3</sup> What Harmony can there be between unconverted and renewed Persons : All the Device and Cunning in the World will never make them fitly frame together ; their Principles, their Views, their Desires,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings vi. 7.<sup>2</sup> Cant. vi, 4.<sup>3</sup> Ephes. ii. 21.



their Hopes, their Expectations, being directly opposite ; so that unless the Lord the Spirit, by his sovereign Power, new models these Sort of Stones, they can never be put into this holy Building, with any Propriety. The Admission of unregenerate Persons, has frequently been a Root of Bitterness springing up, a wild Boar of Dissention, in a Church, to its Sorrow, for some Time, if not its utter Demolition. Whenever the Apostle *Paul* wrote to the Churches, he always addressed them as a Body of Saints, knowing that such only are the proper Subjects of *Christ's* spiritual Kingdom ; and if any of them had received into their Fellowship such as had not first given themselves to the Lord, his Epistle contained no Matter for their Hope or Consolation. Writing to the different Churches, he thus inscribes his Epistles; *To all that be at Rome beloved of God, called to be SAINTS:*<sup>1</sup> *Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in or by Christ Jesus, called to be SAINTS.*<sup>2</sup> *Paul an Apostle of Jesus Christ, by the Will of God to the SAINTS which are at Ephesus.*<sup>3</sup> *Paul and Timothy, the Servants of Jesus Christ, to all the SAINTS in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi;*<sup>4</sup> and thus he addresses the Church at *Colosse*, *To the SAINTS and faithful Brethren in Christ which are at Colosse.*<sup>5</sup> From all these Superscriptions it plainly appears, the Apostle knew of none but SAINTS, as proper Materials for the Building of *Christ's* Church.

<sup>1</sup> *Rom. i. 7.*   <sup>2</sup> *1 Cor. i. 2.*   <sup>3</sup> *Ephes. i. 1.*   <sup>4</sup> *Philip. i. 1.*   <sup>5</sup> *Coloss. i. 2.*

It is true, unconverted Persons may creep in un-  
 awares; and sometimes God wisely ordains their De-  
 tection by their Fellow-Members; while others, in  
 his Sovereignty, he suffers to continue unto the last  
 Hour: As for Instance, the five foolish Virgins;<sup>1</sup>  
 and those also, who are represented as Tares growing  
 among the Corn;<sup>2</sup> are strongly descriptive of unre-  
 newed Persons in *Christ's* Church. When the Corn  
 was properly ripened, and not until then, the Lord  
 of the Harvest ordered the Reapers to gather the  
 Tares in Bundles to burn them, but the Wheat was  
 carefully to be stored in his own Garner. This is  
 awful Work. The Lord help you, Reader, to be  
 watchful! and enable you to examine whether you  
 are of those Hypocrites in *Zion*, who will be surprized  
 with Fearfulness at the Day of his appearing.<sup>3</sup>

But farther, The Stones of which this spiritual  
 House is built, are called *lively* Stones,<sup>4</sup> in Contra-  
 distinction to the inanimate Materials of the Temple;  
 and no Wonder, since *Christ*, who is the very Foun-  
 dation of this Building, is Himself termed a *living*  
 Stone.<sup>5</sup> This symbolical Expression no doubt in-  
 cludes in it their Union to *Christ*, who is their Head  
 of Influence, and in whom alone they spiritually  
 live. Unregenerate Persons cannot possibly be pro-  
 per Stones for this Building, because they have no

<sup>1</sup> *Mat.* xxv. 3.    <sup>2</sup> *Mat.* xiii. 37, 42.    <sup>3</sup> *Ic.* xxxiii.  
 14.    <sup>4</sup> *1 Pet.* ii. 5.    <sup>5</sup> *1 Pet.* ii. 4.

Life: They are spiritually dead. How strange would it appear, to see a Number of shapeless or flawed Stones put into a superb Erection? Infinitely more strange and inconsistent is it, to have a Number of Whore-mongers, Drunkards, Swearers, and self-righteous Persons, appearing as Parts of *Christ's* holy Building.

Members of *Christ's* Church are likewise called *lively* Stones,\* with an allusion to their rational and active Powers. They are not as the lifeless Matter of the Temple of old, but possessed of Reason, capable of Reflection, and of Actions by which God will be honored: But what Honor can redound to God from unconverted Persons? Their very being in the Church may spoil its external Appearance, if not greatly injure its internal Parts. An ingenious Author pertinently observes, "That *Christ's* Church is not  
 " built for the World's *Ishmaels*, but for God's *Isaacs*;  
 " not for prophane *Esaus*, but for God's *Jacobs*; not  
 " for the *Canaanite*, but the *Israelite*; not for the  
 " World's Tricksters, but for God's *Nathaniels*;  
 " not for *Basban's* Bulls, but for *Christ's* Sheep;  
 " not for Nominals, but for such as depart from In-  
 " iquity; not for the Whore of *Babylon*, but for  
 " the chaste Spouse of *Christ*; not for Hypocrites in  
 " Heart, but for God's sincere ones; not for secure

\* 1 Pet. ii. 5.

" Sinners,



“ Sinners, but returning Prodigals; in a Word,  
 “ not for the dead in Sins, but the living in *Jerusa-*  
 “ *lem.*” Thus much for the Building itself. We  
 have seen it is spiritual as composed of living Stones;  
 and ought not to be injured by an Union with, or the  
Admission of unhewn, unpolished, or lifeless Stones.  
 Let us now proceed,

V. *Fifthly*, To consider the WORK and SER-  
 VICE of this House; by which it will farther ap-  
 pear, how far unconverted Persons are proper Ob-  
 jects to be received into it.

The Work and Service of the Church of God is  
 spiritual; therefore unrenewed Persons are not fit  
 to be Members thereof. It is necessary for every  
 Person who engages in any particular Service, to do  
 it properly, that he have a Disposition for it; that it  
 be, in some Respects, agreeable to him, and not di-  
 ametrically dissonant with the Temper and Habit of  
 his Mind: But what can be more immediately, or so  
 strongly opposite, as spiritual Work to a carnal Man?  
 every Part of it must be a wearisome Employ; or  
 more properly speaking, every Attempt to spiritu-  
 al Worship is a fresh Essay to carnal Service, as  
 the following Considerations will, in some Mea-  
 sure, evince:

#### 1. Praise

1. Praise is one Service of this spiritual House; *In every Thing giving Thanks, for this is the Will of God, &c.*<sup>1</sup> *Enter into his Gates with Thanksgiving, and into his Courts with Praise.*<sup>2</sup> So essential to the House of God is Praise, that it is represented under the Simile of one in a waiting Posture, *Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion, &c.*<sup>3</sup> Now on what Ground can an unconverted Man praise God, except for the common Bounties of his Providence, and that he is not cut off in the Midst of his Sins? but these are the least Parts of that Praise in which the real Inhabitants of this glorious House do join: They have to Praise God for *Jesus Christ*, that special Gift of his Love, saying, *He is the fairest among ten thousands and altogether lovely;*<sup>4</sup> but the Stranger has no Heart thus to praise Him; he rather says (for Want of spiritual Understanding) *He hath no Form nor Comeliness, and when we shall see Him there is no Beauty that we should desire Him.*<sup>5</sup> Christ's Saints praise Him for what He is, as God-Man and Mediator; for the Satisfaction He has offered to Divine Justice; for the bringing in of an everlasting Righteousness; for the Hope they have of a personal Interest in Him, and for all the divine Consolations and spiritual Supports they receive from Him, *For of his Fullness they receive, and Grace for Grace.*<sup>6</sup> The poor unconverted Soul beholds not the Greatness and Glory

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. v. 18. <sup>2</sup> Ps. c. 4. <sup>3</sup> Ps. lxxv. 1. <sup>4</sup> Is. lii. 2. <sup>5</sup> John i. 16. <sup>6</sup> Ephes. ii. 12.

of his expiatory Sacrifice, the Perfection and Necessity of his Righteousness for his Justification; is *Without Hope and without God in the World*, and wishes not for any of those sweet and precious Cordials which his Promises afford. How then shall, how can these two Persons agree? And if they agree not, where is their Communion, as the Prophet expresses it? *Can two walk together except they be agreed?*<sup>1</sup>

2. Prayer is another Service of this House, *Even them will I bring to my holy Mountain, and make them joyful in my House of Prayer.*<sup>2</sup> And they continued stedfastly in the Apostle's Doctrine and Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayer.<sup>3</sup> And while Peter was kept in Prison, Prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him.<sup>4</sup> The real Christian delights in this Duty, and esteems it one of his most extraordinary Privileges; but to the Unbeliever it is a dull Exercise, and the various Petitions which are offered up to God, lose their Weight and Importance with Him. *For the natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit.*<sup>5</sup> The one prays for greater Conformity to the Image of God, knowing his own Imperfection, *That I may know Him and the Power of his Resurrection, and the Fellowship of his Sufferings, being made conformable unto*

<sup>1</sup> Amos. iii. 3. <sup>2</sup> Is. lvi. 7. <sup>3</sup> Acts ii. 42. <sup>4</sup> Acts xii. 5. <sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 14.



*his Death*; <sup>1</sup> while the other, like the mistaken Youth in the Gospel, says, *All these Things have I kept from my Youth up*: <sup>2</sup> The former prays that he may be enabled to *Count all Things but Dung that he may win Christ, and be found in Him*, <sup>3</sup> while the other, like the Pharisee, thanks God he is not as other Men are, &c. and therefore stands not in need of any better Righteousness than his own for Justification in the Sight of God: The former prays for an Increase of his Faith, *Lord increase my Faith*; <sup>4</sup> the latter boasts of his Confidence in God, forgetting that *He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him*. <sup>5</sup> By coming to God, is not meant merely a Belief of his Existence, or a Persuasion of our necessary Dependance upon Him, as the Fountain of all Good; but it implies a coming to Him by Faith in the Lord *Jesus Christ*, as the only Foundation of our Acceptance, as may be seen by reading the Context. — A Person that comes not in this Way may talk of trusting God, but his Assertion, without Grace in the Heart, will only serve to corroborate the Declaration of Scripture, that *The Heart is deceitful above all Things, &c.* <sup>6</sup> The lively Christian prays for larger Communications of Grace, and that he may constantly live upon the Lord's *Christ*, as the only

<sup>1</sup> *Phil.* iii. 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Mat.* xix. 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Phil.* iii. 8.

<sup>4</sup> *Luke* xviii. 16.

<sup>5</sup> *Luke* xviii. 5.

<sup>6</sup> *Heb.* xii. 6.

xvii. 9.

Fountain of Supply, *In whom are hid all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge.*<sup>1</sup> The carnal Professor is ever a-thirst for the Emolument and Gains of this uncertain Life, crying, as *Solomon* describes the *Horse-leach*, *give, give.*<sup>2</sup> In a Word, the former prays for all spiritual Blessings, and that he may feel more of the Power of Godliness; while the latter is content with the good Things of this Life, and with the mere Form of Religion. Such Persons as these can never join together in the Work of this spiritual Building of which we have been speaking. There is no Communion between Light and Darkness.<sup>3</sup> God would not have an Ox and an Ass draw together in the same Yoke; consequently such as appear not to have received the Grace of God, in the Judgment of Charity, are not eligible to the Fellowship of Gospel Churches; or, in other Words, to preserve the Figure, are not suitable Materials for this spiritual House.

3. Another Service of this holy House, is the Commemoration of Christ's Death. The Believer understands the real Nature and principal Design of this Service: The Nature of it is figurative, and sets before his mental eyes, the amazing Love of a dear Redeemer; the Symbols of Bread and Wine strikingly represent the breaking of his Body, and the

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 3.    <sup>2</sup> Prov. xxx. 15.    <sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 14.  
<sup>4</sup> Deut. xxii. 10.

shedding of his Blood for the Remission of Sins. *Who was offered up a Sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling Savour.*<sup>1</sup> But can these afford any pleasing Meditations to the unconverted Man? Does he reflect with Pleasure, and contemplate with Wonder, these glorious Expressions of *Christ's* Love to his Church? Does he recollect with sacred Satisfaction the delightful Injunction of our Lord, *This do in Remembrance of Me.*<sup>2</sup> No, he at best has only general and superficial, careless and unprofitable, trifling and inconsiderate Notions of this standing Seal of the New Covenant; he has not a spiritual Eye to see through the Sign, the Thing signified; nor does he understand any Thing of that Glory which this Ordinance peculiarly displays: Add to this, the Terms upon which we are exhorted to come; *Let a Man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup.*<sup>3</sup> I intend not to convey to the Reader's Mind the Idea of any Terms being performed, to intitle us to partake of the Lord's Supper: God forbid! What I understand by the Text now cited, is, "Let a Man examine himself as to his  
 " Views in coming to *Christ's* Table,—what Ground  
 " he has to hope of an Interest in the paschal Lamb,  
 " —what Evidence to conclude he hath a Right to  
 " attend the Banquet of a Redeemer's Love, and  
 " so let him eat." Without such an Examination, he acts a presumptuous Part in partaking of this Di-

<sup>1</sup> *Ephes.* v. 2..    <sup>2</sup> *Luke* xx. 19.    <sup>3</sup> *1 Cor.* xi. 28.



ine Feast. The unconverted Man, who has no Disposition or Ability for this Work, is necessarily excluded from a Participation of the Ordinance: And if that is the Case, it follows that he is not a proper Subject for *Christ's* spiritual House, since there are none to be received into it, but what are alike obligated to engage in the different Works and Services connected with their Character as Members of *Christ's* Church.

The Believer not only understands the Nature of this Ordinance as a Figure, and as thus described, but he likewise comprehends its principal Design; namely, to encourage his Faith and Hope, and animate him in the Expectation of *Christ's* second glorious Advent. *For He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.* At his Lord's Table he comforts himself with the pleasing Prospect of that triumphant Period, when he shall have Admission into the Realms of pure and uninterrupted Felicity; — when Sin, the constant Bane of all his Happiness, shall be perfectly and for ever absent; — and when he shall be adorned with Holiness, see God Face to Face, and live and reign with his Redeemer for ever. But the unconverted Man must tremble at the Thought of *Christ's* second Appearance; and, if he duly considered, would feel the keenest Pangs of Horror from every Reflection on the approaching solemn Period; a Pe-

\* *Heb. x. 37.*

riod

riod, which Conscience frequently assures him, must shortly take Place, and which this Ordinance testifies. *As oft as ye do this, ye shew forth the Lord's Death until He come.*<sup>1</sup> The Believer, when he sees the Bread broken, and the Wine poured forth, in the blessed Actings of Faith, says, " Oh what marvellous Love ! What astonishing, stupendous Grace is this I behold ! Was *Christ's* precious Body, which that Element of Bread figures to my View, crucified for the Expiation of my Offences ? Was that rich Blood, which the Wine represents, shed for the cleansing my Soul from all its Sin and Impurities ? Is there now a new and living Way consecrated, through the Veil of *Christ's* Flesh, for my free and ready Access to his God and my God, to his Father and my Father ? Oh ! what can I say ? but *blessed be the God of Peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant;*<sup>2</sup> who has left his Church such a glorious Testimony of his Love ; and in Compassion to his Disciples, who hope for his coming again to receive them to Himself, gave them this Ordinance as a Pledge of his Faithfulness, and the Certainty of his Return to their complete Salvation ; *That where He is there they may be also.*"<sup>3</sup> The unconverted Man is a Stranger to all these delightful Contemplations and glorious Prospects. He sees no great,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 6.    <sup>2</sup> Heb. xiii 20.    <sup>3</sup> John xiv. 3.

desirable, or particular Sight in the Elements of Bread and Wine; and while he continues so, can never properly engage in this Service. God is not pleased with Idlers in his House; all must work or should leave his Service. — There is no Alternative. I do not mean by, “all must work,” that a Man’s partaking of this Ordinance is a Work necessary to his Salvation. The Expression comports with the Figure hitherto maintained, describing the Work or Service of God’s spiritual House.

4. Baptism is another Service of this holy Building, — and a most elevating and establishing Service it is; as in it the Believer views the Covenants of Promise, and is led to a Retrospect of that gracious Assurance of God to *Abraham*, *And I will establish my Covenant between Me and thee, and thy Seed after thee in their Generations, for an everlasting Covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy Seed after thee.*<sup>1</sup> Circumcision was a Sign of the Old Covenant, and whoever had it not, was excluded the Benefit thereof, without Respect of Persons. It was indeed no more than a Sign of that Purity which God had a Right to expect from all *Abraham’s* promised Seed; nevertheless, as it was God’s Command, it became a solemn Ordinance, and to be punctually regarded. All who engaged in it, making reasonable Allowance for the Ignorance of some then, as well as now under our

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xvii. 7.



more enlightened Dispensation, well knew the grand Design thereof; that it was to represent the coming of a Purifier, who should not merely circumcise the Flesh, but the Heart. *The Lord thy God will circumcise thy Heart, and the Heart of thy Seed.*<sup>1</sup> This ceremonial Institution was strictly maintained by the *Jews* until the promised Messiah appeared, who was to fulfil the whole legal Dispensation, and be the Mediator of a new and better Covenant. Accordingly that his Church might not lose an Ordinance, in the Place of that painful one of Circumcision, which was correspondent with the Nature of the Sacrifices, and other Rites of the Mosaic *Œconomy*, He instituted Baptism. His Appearance, and the Work He was to do, totally precluded any farther ceremonial Institutions, or the Continuance of those already appointed, since they all referred to, and centered in Himself. Baptism, or the Sprinkling clean Water on the Infant, instructs us in our natural Pollution and Defilement by Sin, — and teaches us the absolute Necessity of being Partakers of the Blood of Sprinkling, which cleanseth from all Sin,<sup>2</sup> and of the out-pouring, sanctifying Influences of the Holy Spirit. — Baptism is a Figure of Regeneration, and the Believer, or real Member of *Christ's* Church esteems himself obliged to observe it, and with Delight engages in the Ordinance; therein he sees the Strength, Meaning, and Perpetuity of God's

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxx. 6.      <sup>2</sup> 1 John i. 7.

Promises, “ *I will be a God to thee and to thy Seed.*”<sup>1</sup> And *I will take the stony Heart out of their Flesh, and will give them an Heart of Flesh.*<sup>2</sup> Therefore, when he dedicates his Child to God, in Baptism, this Promise is one, among many, which he pleads, and his Language, perhaps, is similar to this, “ Lord, I here make a full, and unreserved “ Surrender of this Infant unto Thee, counting it “ my highest Privilege; and though I know it is “ *conceived in Sin, and shapened in Iniquity,*<sup>3</sup> yet on “ thy Promise, that Thou wilt renew within the “ infant Seed of thy People a new Spirit, and re- “ move from them their stony Hearts, I now rest by “ Faith; O Thou Covenant keeping God, let thy “ Servant, experience the Fulfilment of this thy “ Word, on which Thou hast caused him to hope.”

But not only is Baptism a Sign of Regeneration, as Water is an Emblem of Purity, but it is also a Seal of the New Covenant. The Apostle *Peter*, when he was introducing the Gospel of *Christ* to the *Jews*, who received the Word gladly, after the miraculous Descent of the Holy Ghost, thus expresses himself, *Repent ye, and be baptised, &c. For the Promise is unto you and to your Children.*<sup>4</sup> As if he had said, “ I exhort you to be baptised in the Name of “ our Lord *Jesus Christ*, since as you are now

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xvii. 7.   <sup>2</sup> Ezek. xi. 19.   <sup>3</sup> Ps. li. 5.   <sup>4</sup> Acts ii. 39.

“ deprived of the Seal of the Covenant made to  
 “ Abraham, “ Circumcision,” this is a Seal of  
 “ that new and well-ordered Covenant of which  
 “ Jesus is the Mediator; for remember, the Pro-  
 “ mise is unto you and to your Children.” Paul,  
 writing to the *Galatians*, evinces that Baptism is a  
 Seal of the new Covenant, and comes in the Place  
 of Circumcision, *For in Christ Jesus, says he, nei-  
 ther Circumcision nor Uncircumcision availeth any Thing,  
 but a new Creature;*<sup>1</sup> now Baptism is demonstrably  
 a Figure of that Newness of Life which the Apostle  
 alludes to, *The like Figure whereunto Baptism doth now  
 save us, &c. by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ,*<sup>2</sup>  
 which Resurrection, is clearly applied to the blessed  
 Effects of a spiritual Baptism, *Know ye not that so  
 many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were  
 baptized into his Death? Therefore we are buried with  
 Him by Baptism into Death: That like as Christ  
 was raised up from the Dead by the Glory of the Fa-  
 ther, even so we also should walk in Newness of  
 Life. For if we have been planted together in the Like-  
 ness of his Death (meaning Baptism) we shall be also in  
 the Likeness of his Resurrection.*<sup>3</sup> And Paul in his E-  
 pistle to the *Galatians* informs them, that *The Blessing  
 of Abraham, (through the Atonement of Christ)  
 was come on the Gentiles, that they might receive the  
 Promise of the Spirit through Faith.*<sup>4</sup> All agree that

<sup>1</sup> Gal. vi. 15.<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. iii. 21.<sup>3</sup> Rom. vi. 3, 5.<sup>4</sup> Gal. iii. 14.



the Ordinance of Water Baptism is figurative of the Influences of that Divine Spirit which was promised. Thus it is apparent, that Baptism is a Work or Service of God's spiritual House, and that all its Members should embrace the Privilege of dedicating their Children to God in this Divine Ordinance; in as much as it is a Seal of that Covenant, which includes all the Blessings to which, as regenerated Persons, and Members of *Christ's* mystical Body, they are clearly intitled.

But what is all this to an unconverted Man? It is as a strange Language, an unknown Tongue; he knows not what is meant experimentally by a Resurrection to Newness of Life, nor what is to be understood by the Seal of Faith; and certainly, while in this State of unfeeling Ignorance, cannot be a suitable Member of *Christ's* spiritual House. Besides, he has not any Right to the Privilege just mentioned, for the Promise is unto the Seed of *Christ* by Faith, and unto their Children; so that the unrenewed Man has no visible Concern or Interest in the Promise. As all the Blessings contained in this Promise, appertain only to the Elect, no Pastor of a Church can scripturally baptize the Children of unconverted Parents. If he does, he undertakes to initiate a Child into *Christ's* visible Church, contrary to the original Design and immediate Tenor of the Promise, or without any apparent legal Right to the Contents thereof.

Some possibly may ask, "What! must all the  
 "Children of unconverted Parents be refused this  
 "Ordinance?" I answer, upon the Authority of  
 Divine Revelation, it appears to me they must.  
 When the Father's Title to the Blessings signified by  
 this Ordinance is established, then the Son's Right,  
 upon the Ground of the Promise, becomes valid.—  
 Methinks I perceive the Warmth of a tender Parent's  
 Breast glow with a kind of Indignation, and inclined  
 to set me down as one of the most cruel and rigid  
 Class of Beings. But why? The Truth must be  
 declared, let who will dissent and censure, or applaud.  
 But remember, ye tender Parents, that Water-bap-  
 tism is not a saving Ordinance, and therefore if a  
 Child dies unbaptised it will not be lost for Want of  
 a mere outward Sign:—And if the Child be baptised,  
 and should live to Years of Maturity, and continue  
 in an unconverted State, Baptism in his Infancy will  
 not in the least avail him, and then the Obligation  
 of the Parents, in this Ordinance, ceases for ever.  
 If, on the other Hand, a Child should live unbap-  
 tised until he arrives at Years of Understanding and  
 Discretion, and then should be called by the Grace  
 of God, his Want of Infant Baptism will not ex-  
 clude him the Benefits of the new Covenant, and  
 his adult Baptism will constitute a legal Right to an  
 Admission into *Christ's* militant Church, the Seat and  
 Subject of all his Ordinances, and the visible Entrance  
 into his spiritual Kingdom: So that the Want of In-  
 fant

fant Baptism precludes not our Hope, nor doth the administering thereof insure our Salvation. Viewing the Promise as unto Believers and their Children, it is, however, a glorious Privilege and an inestimable Blessing. Thus much for the Work and Service of this holy Building. I hope, Reader, by this Time, thou knowest something of those sacred Privileges and blessed Immunities with which *Christ's Church* is endowed. As thou art spiritually incorporated for God's Worship and Service, and as He is not slack to fulfil his Promise, thou wilt yet know more sensibly; by happy Experience, and not merely in Theory, what is to be enjoyed in a steady, constant, and unremitted Attachment to the Services of true Godliness. I now proceed to shew;

VI. *Sixthly*, What OFFICERS *Christ* has appointed in this House.

In most capital Houses, there are frequently Persons appointed to superintend its several Departments, that every Thing may be transacted with the strictest Order and Decency. So, in *Christ's Church*, there are Officers set apart for the good Government of its grand Concerns, that *All Things may be done with Decency and in Order.*<sup>1</sup> Much has been said upon this Subject, therefore nothing very new can be expected: I shall, however, endeavour to give a clear scriptural

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 40.



Account of the Officers of *Christ's Church*, and their Qualifications, free of any Bias by the Positions of any particular Author.

The different Officers which are appointed in this Church, sustain different Appellations, and yet a Variety of Names are given to those employed in the same Work. For Instance, the Titles of Bishops and Elders are sometimes expressly intended for the same Persons. *For this Cause I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in Order the Things that are wanting, and ordain ELDERS in every City as I had appointed thee, if any be blameless, &c. For a BISHOP must be blameless.*<sup>1</sup> Here the Apostle's two Characters center in one Person; or rather the two Names are given to the same Officers. As if he had said, "Ordain, or appoint Elders in every City, (if by careful Examination you can find any who are blameless in their moral Characters) for BISHOPS must be blameless." If by *Elders* and *Bishops* the Apostle did not mean the same Persons, why does he, when exhorting them to ordain Elders, if they could find any blameless, add, *For a BISHOP must be blameless*. If that was not the Case, he would no doubt have said, as is apparently his Meaning:—"For an ELDER must be blameless." The learned Dr. Owen, in Reference to this Point, has the following Paragraph, "The Apostle being at *Miletus*, sent to *Ephe-*

<sup>1</sup> *Titus* i. 5, 7.

“ *for the Elders of the Church to come unto*  
 “ *him, that is the Elders of the Church at Ephesus,*  
 “ *as hath been elsewhere undeniably demonstrated;*  
 “ *unto these Elders he says, Take Heed unto yourselves,*  
 “ *and to all the Flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath*  
 “ *made you Bishops, to feed the Church of God.*” If  
 “ Elders and Bishops be not the same Persons,  
 “ having the same Office, the same Function, with  
 “ the same Duties, and the same Names, it is in-  
 “ conceivable that it should be so expressed; for  
 “ those Elders are they whom the Holy Ghost made  
 “ Bishops; they were many of them in the same  
 “ Church, and their Duty was to attend to the  
 “ Flock, and to feed the Church, which comprize  
 “ all the Duties, the whole Function of Elders and  
 “ Bishops, which must therefore be the same. This  
 “ plain Testimony can no where be evaded by Pre-  
 “ tences and Conjectures unwritten and uncertain;  
 “ the only Answer unto it is, It was indeed so then,  
 “ but it was otherwise afterwards, to which some  
 “ now betake themselves. But these Elders were  
 “ Elders only, and not Bishops; or Bishops only  
 “ and not Elders; or the same Persons were Elders  
 “ and Bishops, as is plainly affirmed in the Words.  
 “ The latter is that which we plead. If the first be  
 “ asserted, then there was no Bishop at *Ephesus*;  
 “ for these Elders had the whole Over-sight of the  
 “ Flock: If the second, then there were no Elders

” *Acts xx. 28.*

“ at

“ at all, which is no good Exposition of those  
 “ Words, *That Paul called unto him the Elders of the*  
 “ *Church.*”<sup>1</sup> No one disputes that the Apostles were  
 Bishops, and therefore if it appears from Scripture  
 that an Apostle is stiled an Elder, I think the Matter  
 will be left indisputable. For this Purpose recur to  
 the Expression of *Peter*; *The Elders who are among*  
*you I exhort who also am an Elder.*<sup>2</sup> For the ap-  
 pointing these Officers we have Scripture Example  
 and Authority.

Many Disputes have arisen on this Part of the Sub-  
 ject, which I think unprofitable: They have a Ten-  
 dency to confuse the Understanding, and prevent  
 Persons forming a proper Judgment. A few Texts  
 shall suffice to prove that different Names were given  
 to the same Officer. *Take Heed therefore unto your-*  
*selves, and to all the Flock over which the Holy Ghost*  
*hath made you Overseers, to feed the Church of God,*  
*which He hath purchased with his own Blood.*<sup>3</sup> *The El-*  
*ders which are among you, I exhort, who also am an*  
*Elder, and a Witness of the Sufferings of Christ, and*  
*also a Partaker of the Glory that shall be revealed. The*  
*Elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the*  
*Truth.*<sup>4</sup>

It will be granted by the most strenuous Friends of

<sup>1</sup> *Acts* xx. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *1 Pet.* v. 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Acts* xx. 28.

<sup>4</sup> *1 Pet.* v. 1

<sup>5</sup> *John* iii. 1.



Episcopacy, that different Names being thus given to the same Officers, greatly embarrasses the Subject, and renders the End of the closest Researches rather indeterminate. However this may be, we shall have no difficult Task to ascertain what Officers are really necessary for a Church of *Christ*, provided we leave the mere appellative Distinctions, and immediately attend to those Directions which were given by *Paul* to *Timothy*, and view his Address to the *Philippians*.

From *Paul's* Epistle to *Timothy*, it evidently appears no Way necessary to have more than two Officers, *Bishops* or Pastors, and *Deacons*: In the third Chapter he mentions all the Qualifications to be possessed by these two Officers. It is natural to suppose that if there had been any other Officers in the Church, he would not have neglected giving his Advice also to them; especially as he was instructing young *Timothy* in every Thing respecting both his own Work as an Elder, and the Church's Discipline and Order; and descends to give some Directions even concerning the Behaviour of *Deacons* Wives. When he addresses the Church at *Philippi*, he writes to them as having no other Officers than *Bishops* and *Deacons*; *Paul and Timotheus, — the Servants of Jesus Christ, to all the Saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the Bishops and Deacons.*

<sup>1</sup> *Phil. i. 1.*

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How many Deacons are necessary for a Gospel Church, is a Matter upon which Scripture is totally silent, and therefore in such a Case Reason and Prudence must direct; if the Number of Members of one Community is greater than another, they consequently need more Officers. All that is said, respecting the Necessity of having other Officers is merely conjectural; whereas, what is expressed to *Timothy* and the *Philippians*, is clear and certain; and by the Apostle's Silence, may be argued to be as much as is necessary for the Rule of our Conduct. There were, indeed, more Officers than Pastors and Deacons when the Apostles first began to settle different Churches: but then we should consider the Nature of their Situation, and the particular Circumstances they were under. The Apostles, and some of the Elders they ordained, were called, for the Propagation of the Gospel, to travel from Place to Place; and therefore they found it expedient, that ruling Elders should be appointed, that nothing in their Absence might be wanted for the Peace and good Order of the Churches.

Again, the continual and large Additions of Converts that were making to the Churches, rendered it indispensably necessary for the Apostles and Elders to have farther Helps; otherwise much Confusion must have necessarily ensued, and their Labour been greatly encreased. More especially does this appear, since the principal Part of the Controversy amounts to no more

more, than for ruling Elders, *To rule with Diligence,*<sup>1</sup> and take Care of the spiritual Concerns of the Church, while the Deacons attended to all the secular Affairs thereof. As to the *Teaching, ruling Elders*, they are the same Persons as are elsewhere stiled Bishops, Pastors, &c. *Let the Elders*, says Paul, *That rule well, be counted worthy of double Honor, &c.*<sup>2</sup> *The Elders which are among you I exhort, who also am an Elder, and a Witness of the Sufferings of Christ, and also a Partaker of the Glory that shall be revealed, Feed the Flock of God, &c.*<sup>3</sup> And the Apostle, in another Place, gives us an Account of their different Abilities for their several Duties. *Having then Gifts differing according to the Grace that is given to us, whether Prophecy, let us prophecy according to the Proportion of Faith, or Ministry, let us wait on our ministering, or he that teacheth, on teaching, or he that exhorteth on Exhortation, &c.*<sup>4</sup> Dr. Owen observes, “ That those whose Names are the same, equally common and applicable to them all, whose Function is the same, whose Qualifications and Characters are the same, whose Duties, Account and Rewards are the same, and concerning whom there is no one Place of Scripture, in which the least mention is made of Inequality, Disparity, or Preference of Office among,—are essentially and every Way the same; that thus it is with the Elders and Bishops in the Scripture, cannot well be denied.”

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xii. 8.<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 17.<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. v. 1.<sup>4</sup> Rom. xii. 6, 8.



I shall now endeavor to point out what are the Qualifications essential to the Character of those two Officers, PASTORS and DEACONS, as deducible from Scripture.

I. As to PASTORS.—These were promised by God to the Church,—*I will give you Pastors after mine own Heart, who shall feed you with Knowledge and Understanding.*<sup>1</sup> He promised—He hath performed. The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to Timothy, gives a particular Description of a Pastor's Qualifications.

1. *He must be blameless*, That is, his Deportment must be so circumspect, as not to subject him to any just Censures from the World.

2. *He must be the Husband of one Wife.* There was peculiar Propriety in this Hint, in the Apostles Time, when Poligamy was so prevalent among the Gentiles. In our Days it is not so common, as the Laws of our Country forbid it under the severest Penalties.

3. *Vigilant*; not inactive in his Master's Work; but ever watchful and steady in the Discharge of his ministerial Service, knowing he has not received it of the Lord to be indolent, or for an indifferent Purpose.

<sup>1</sup> Jer. iii. 15.

4. *Sober*;

4. *Sober*; not riotous and disorderly in his Walk, but setting an Example of uniform and steady Adherence to the Dictates of Reason and Sobriety.

5. *Of good Behaviour*; not unmannerly in his Conduct towards either *Jew* or *Gentile*, bond or free. Rudeness is no Part of a Christian's Character. — Under the specious Pretext of Faithfulness, some Men have shamefully disgraced Religion, and caused others to blaspheme the Name and Ways of *Christ*.

6. *Given to Hospitality*; ready to communicate to the Distresses of others in Temporals (so far as they have Ability) as well as administer to them in Spirituals.

7. *Apt to teach*; not ignorant of their Calling, but properly gifted for their sacred Character, and equally ready to exercise their Abilities in the important Work, for their Peoples Conviction, Edification, or Comfort, as they shall particularly and distinctly require.

8. *Not given to Wine*; not to an Excess of it. — The Juice of the Grape may be as conscientiously drank by a Minister, in Moderation, as by any of his Hearers; what is said of Wine, may be equally applied to any other strong Liquor.

9. *No*

9. *No Striker*; not of a Disposition for engaging in Quarrels or Disputes, but rather disposed to act the Part of a Mediator between two contending Parties; or, if he be a Principal himself, sooner put up with a small Insult, than return Blows: However, if a Minister of *Christ* be assaulted, and there are no Means of his escaping without defending himself by Blows, the Phrase cannot mean that he shall tamely submit to all the Wantonness and Cruelty of Enemies and Madmen.

10. *Not greedy of filthy Lucre*; not one who for any temporal Advantage would make a Sale of the Truth; — like *Judas* sell his Lord for thirty Pieces of Silver; — or like *Damas* through love of the present Life, quit *Christ's* Service.

11. *Patient*; with Respect to his own personal Trials, and with Regard to the Promises of God. Neither in Haste for Deliverance from the one, or the Fulfilment of the other.

12. *Not a Brawler*; no Way disposed to make or cherish Disputes and Quarrels in the Church, or to set Families at Variance; such Things ought not even to be named among Pastors.

13. *Not covetous*; not desirous of possessing that which belongs to his Hearers or others; A covetous Person is not fit to have the Oversight of a Gospel Church,



Church, as it is more than probable, he may mutilate the Truth, or be a Time-server, to promote his own mercenary Purposes.

14. *One that ruleth well his own House, &c.* Not merely one who appears to have the Form of Religion when in the Church, but one on whose Heart the Truths of the Gospel are so influential, as to enable him to rule his House or Family, as that they may become also Examples to the Church. Besides, if he is incapable of managing the Concerns of his own Family, how can he be a proper Person to super-intend the Concerns of a Church of *Christ*; as the Apostle judiciously reasons in the subsequent Verse?<sup>1</sup>

15. *Not a Novice*; he must, in some Measure at least, be instructed in the Doctrines of the Gospel. Not one who is a Stranger, either to the theoretical, or experimental Truths thereof; not one who possesses some small Gifts, and is puffed up thereby to consider himself fully and competently qualified for theological Disquisitions, and the pastoral Office; lest, says the Apostle, *He being lifted up with Pride fall into the Condemnation of the Devil.*<sup>2</sup>

16. *He must have a good Report of them that are without*; I cannot think what Sense those Persons put upon this Text, who, if a Minister preaches

<sup>1</sup> Ver 5.    <sup>2</sup> Ver. 6.

the Gospel with some Degree of Energy, and has rather a popular Talent, however infamous and justly censurable his general Character may be, can calmly fit under his Ministrations. *Christ's* Service is as holy as well as an honorable Employ; and therefore all his Servants ought to regard the Injunction, *Be ye holy, even as I am holy.*<sup>1</sup> A Minister of *Christ* then (as far as can reasonably be expected) must have a good Report of them who are without; that is, of them who appear not at present to be in God's Covenant, but in the Devil's League; not in *Christ's* holy Church, but in *Satan's* idolatrous Temple; *Least he fall into Reproach, &c.* That is, least the World taking Advantage thereof, severely reflect on his Character, as well as on the Church, who by their free Suffrages, hath elected him to the pastoral Office, distress the Minds of its Members, and admit the Enemy to exult, saying, *Ab! so would we have it.*<sup>2</sup>

These are some of the more ordinary, though not trifling Qualifications of a true Gospel Minister, as given us by the inspired Apostle. But there are still more important Endowments, as to their Nature, though perhaps not as to their Consequences, with which every Minister of the new Dispensation should be furnished. Three of these I shall briefly mention without any particular Enlargement.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. i. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Psal xxxv. 25.

1. A Pastor of a Church should have ministerial Gifts, which Gifts are of a spiritual Nature, and are said to be bestowed by God himself upon his Servants, as the Apostle expresses it, *When He ascended up on high, he led Captivity captive, and gave Gifts unto Men.*<sup>1</sup> If Ministers are not qualified for their Work, how will they be able to defend the Truths of the Gospel against its many implacable Enemies. This is one Branch of their Duty. They are also to aim at establishing the Minds of their Hearers, that they be not *tossed to and fro and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine,*<sup>2</sup> But how will they be capable of this, or of building up their People in their most holy Faith, when many Parts of it they cannot comprehend themselves, much less elucidate and enforce it for their Peoples Comfort and Edification: To this Purpose the Apostle, after having mentioned these Gifts, adds for what End and Design they were bestowed, *For the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry; for the edifying the Body of Christ.*<sup>3</sup>

2. He must have received the Grace of God in Truth. *Thou, therefore, says Paul to Timothy, be strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus.*<sup>4</sup> This is absolutely necessary, and cannot by any Means be dispensed with, in as much as it is impossible for them, without it, to fulfil the Work of their Ministry in a proper Manner; or how can they say of the Lord

<sup>1</sup> *Ephes.* iv. 8, 11.—*Rom.* xii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ephes.* iv. 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Ephes.* iv. 12.    <sup>4</sup> *2 Tim.* ii. 1.



*Jesus, Who comforteth us in all our Tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them who are in any Trouble, by the Comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.*<sup>1</sup> It is the Business of a Pastor to seek to comfort the People of his Charge, when under any spiritual Distress; but this he cannot do, if he himself is a Stranger to the Grace of God; seeing Strangers intermeddle not with these Things.

3. He must likewise have the peculiar Teachings of the Holy Ghost, *Which Things also we speak, not in the Words which Mens Wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual Things with spiritual.*<sup>2</sup> It is not every Man who has even Gifts and Grace, that is called to minister in *Christ's Church* as a Pastor, but such as appear to have received the Holy Spirit. *Now we have received not the Spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is of God; for what Purpose? That we might know the Things that are freely given to us of God.*<sup>3</sup> The very Administration of the Gospel is attributed to the Holy Spirit, *How, shall not the Ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious.*<sup>4</sup> If a Minister hath not Grace in his Heart, the Spirit (in an ordinary Way) will not work by his Instrumentality. Churches, therefore, should be very careful and deliberate in their Choice of a Pastor. It is of greater Consequence to have a Minister who has Grace in his Heart, with the Anointings of the Spi-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. i. 4.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 13.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 12.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 8.

rit, than the more generally captivating Accomplishments which constitute a Person an agreeable Orator, as Address, Cadence, Pathos, and Elocution; though these are by no Means to be despised as indifferent, or to be contemned as useless, but ever to be respected as pleasing and instructive Ornaments.

To these I might add, as Reason most naturally suggests, that a Pastor should be furnished with human Learning.\* Persons were not suffered to stand, even to minister in the Presence of *Nebuchadnezzar*, until they had been three Years privately instructed in human Sciences; much less then should Ministers presume to teach in the Presence of the King of Kings without some literary Attainments. They should excel in spiritual Knowledge. *But we speak the Wisdom of God in a Mystery, even the hidden Wisdom which God ordained before the World, unto*

\* When I say a Pastor should be furnished with human Learning, I only mean to speak in general; and not to intimate that all Persons who are destitute thereof, should avoid taking upon them that important Charge.—I really believe many have been called to the Work of the Ministry, who have been possessed of little or no human Learning.—But of this ignorant persons have frequently aimed to avail themselves, in Vindication of their Conduct, in entering upon the Ministry without just Evidence of its being their Duty.—By which Means, the Mouths of many have been widely opened to speak Evil of the Gospel of Christ.

our Glory.<sup>1</sup> Be sound in the Faith, *Hold fast the Form of sound Words, &c.*<sup>2</sup> Be of an humble Disposition, *Yea all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with Humility.*<sup>3</sup> Of tender, sympathetic Feelings, *Put on therefore, as the Elect of God, holy and beloved, Bowels of Mercies, Kindness, Humbleness of Mind, Meekness, long Suffering.*<sup>4</sup> Heavenly minded, *But thou, O Man of God, flee these Things* (meaning an immoderate Pursuit of temporal Acquisitions) *and follow after Righteousness, Godliness, &c.*<sup>5</sup> In a Word, they must be Examples to their Flocks, *Be thou an Example of the Believers in Word, in Conversation, in Charity, in Spirit, in Faith, in Purity.*<sup>6</sup> But as all these Things naturally offer themselves to the Reflection of the meanest Capacity, it would be trifling to descant upon them. I hope, from what has been hinted, Churches may be able, clearly to discern the Path of Duty in which they should constantly tread, and the Line of Conduct which they should invariably pursue in the Choice of a Pastor.

However, I cannot quit this Head without dropping a Hint to such as undertake the pastoral Office. They should be fully convinced that they are called to the Work. It is an awful Thing for a Minister to labor in the Dark. In order therefore to prevent it, he should be earnest at the Throne of Grace for Instruction. Such as are not called by God to labor

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 7.<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. i. 13.<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. v. 5, 6.<sup>4</sup> Col. iii. 12.<sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 11.<sup>6</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 12.



in his Vineyard, and yet are there, idling instead of working, have no Reason (however they may presume) to expect his Blessing: They should recollect the dreadful Case of *Uzziah* in daring to invade the Priest's Office. It is said, *When he was strong, his Heart was lifted up to his Destruction: For he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the Temple of the Lord, to burn Incense upon the Altar of Incense: What was the Consequence? why, While he had a Censor in his Hand, to burn Incense, and while he was wrath with the Priest, the Leprosy even rose up in his Forehead before the Priest in the House of the Lord from beside the Incense Altar.*<sup>1</sup> The Case of *Saul* should not be forgotten. The *Israelites* having been greatly distressed at the Appearance of so large a Number of *Philistines*, followed their King and Leader, *Saul*, with trembling; he observing the Fears of some, and that others had left him, and secreted themselves in Caves, Thickets, Rocks, and other Places, called for a Burnt-offering and a Peace-offering, that he might enquire of the Lord for Direction in his critical Situation. Impatient for the Return of *Samuel* the Prophet, he precipitately sacrificed, contrary to the positive Command of God; for which inconsiderate and presumptuous Action, he was severely reprov'd, and justly threatened with the Loss of his Kingdom.<sup>2</sup> — Once more, the Conduct of *Uzziah* should not be pass'd by us unnoticed. Distrusting the Wisdom and Power of God, in the

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. xxvi. 19.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. xiii. 14.

Support and Protection of his own Ark, he hastily stretched forth his Hand and took hold of it. At this Effort of his Weakness, *The Anger of the Lord was kindled against him, and he smote him.*<sup>1</sup> The two last mentioned Persons, seem to have had good Intentions in what they did. *Uzziah* because he thought the Ark would fall to the Ground; and *Saul*, as he was in Distress, conceived it became him, on that Account, and for the Deliverance he wanted, to offer a Burnt-offering unto the Lord. From whence we may learn, that good Views are not sufficient to authorize a Person to engage in the Ministry. God would have none employed under the old Dispensation, without his sending them; like those of whom the Prophet *Jeremiah* speaks, *I have not sent those Prophets, yet they ran. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.*<sup>2</sup> The Apostle *Paul* declares he received his Right to the Ministry immediately from God. *The Ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God.*<sup>3</sup> Again, *Say to Archippus, take heed to the Ministry which thou hast received in the Lord that thou fulfill it.*<sup>4</sup>

It may be asked, how shall a Person be satisfied whether he is called to the Ministry or not; I answer, let him review all those Qualifications I have drawn from Scripture, and see whether he possesses them in any Measure; and then by an earnest Application to God in Prayer, and the Prayers of his People,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. vi. 6, 7. <sup>2</sup> 1 Jer. xxiii. 21. <sup>3</sup> Acts xx. 24. <sup>4</sup> Col. iv. 17.

he need not doubt, but that if it is the Lord's Will, he should be his Servant in a ministerial Capacity, He will influence him to the Choice thereof, and open a Door for his Entrance ; Remember his Promises ; *He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him ;* <sup>1</sup> And again, *Then shall ye call upon Me, and ye shall go and pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you.* <sup>2</sup> As Paul declares, that he was called to be an Apostle, so every Gospel Minister should be satisfactorily persuaded in his own Mind, he is called to that sacred, honorable, and arduous Service.

I now proceed, having considered the Character and Qualifications, to take a transient View of the Duty and Work of a Minister of the Gospel. And,

I. It is the Duty of every Gospel Minister, more or less, to give himself to STUDY.

Upon the Introduction and first Propagation of the Gospel, and before the New Testament was penned, which so clearly delineates the Character and marks out the Duty of a Minister of Christ, Men were extraordinarily anointed to their high and important Work ; but now, as God has withdrawn the extra Effusions and special Assistances of his Holy Spirit, it is required of them particularly to *study* the Scriptures. To this, even *Timothy* was warmly exhorted. *Study to shew thyself approved unto God.* <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Psal.* ix. 1. 15.    <sup>2</sup> *Jer.* xxix. 12.    <sup>3</sup> *2 Tim.* ii. 15.



That is, apply thyself with the closest Attention to the Word of God, as that Word contains in it all that a Sinner can hope for, or receive — and as from it all the Arguments for his Comfort and Consolation are derived, it becomes his indispensable Duty to study; or diligently search to find the Mind of the Spirit. Perhaps some Person, who is an Enemy to Study, may object and say, that when *Paul* exhorts *Timothy*, to *study to shew himself approved unto God*, it implies nothing more, than so faithfully to conduct himself in the Work of the Ministry, as to meet with the Divine Approbation; to which I answer, How was he so likely to discharge the sacred Service in which he was engaged with Faithfulness, and labor with Success in his holy Vocation, as when he carefully studied and cautiously explained the Old Testament. This was the only effectual Way of *Approving himself unto God, a Workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.* The very Phraseology of this Text imports STUDY. “A WORKMAN” “RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE “WORD,” how can this properly be done without Study? It cannot; and this Portion of Scripture evidently enjoins *Timothy* to a careful Explanation of God’s Prophecies and Promises. To conclude, that *Timothy* was exhorted to *study*, may be clearly proved from those peculiar Expressions of *Paul* in his first Epistle to him, such as, *Give Attendance to read-*

1 Tim. ii. 15.

ing;<sup>1</sup> *Meditate upon these Things.* <sup>2</sup> *Take Heed unto thyself and to thy Doctrine.* <sup>3</sup> These different Phrases, incontestibly prove the Duty and Necessity of a studious Attention to Revelation. And indeed, this is the only Way to expect Success, whatever God does to the contrary on particular Occasions. When Ministers can trifle away their Time, and omit the proper Discussion of their Subjects, (vainly presuming on their natural or acquired Abilities) until they come to preach, they have no just Grounds to expect a divine Blessing. Such Conduct is directly opposite to many in Scripture, who are said to *labor in the Word and Doctrine*; which Expression is certainly meant to indicate the Greatness of the Work, and the arduous Nature of the Christian Ministry.

Study is opposed to Indolence, and Ministers ought not on one Hand to presume upon the Assistance of the Spirit without Study; nor on the other, preach other Men's Discourses to save themselves the Pains of Study. God declares He is against such a Character as the latter, in very emphatical Expressions, *Therefore behold I am against the Prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my Words every one from his Neighbour, Behold I am against the Prophets, saith the Lord, that use their Tongues, and say, HE SAITH. That is, who declares God saith so and so, TO THEM,*

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 13.    <sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 15.    <sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 16.

when they have only learned what God has revealed of his Will from his own Prophets. This is no uncommon Thing in our Day. But,

II. As it is a Minister's Duty to study, so it is equally his Work to preach. This he is to do, according to the Apostle's Injunction, by *rightly dividing the Word*,<sup>1</sup> which consists,

1. In clearly opening the Sense of any particular Passage, so that the People do not mistake the Meaning, or be left in a State of Ambiguity respecting the Truths and Precepts of the Gospel. When this has been the Case, the People have frequently drawn such false Conclusions, as greatly to perplex their own Minds, and have been the unhappy Means of distressing others.

2. To divide the Word, the various Doctrines of the Gospel should be maintained in their separate and material Distinctions. The Hearers should be taught the Occasion of their Ruin, SIN; and the Means of their Recovery, GRACE; *That whereas Sin did abound, Grace did much more abound.*<sup>2</sup> Justification, our Clearance from Guilt, — and Sanctification, our Meetness for Heaven, should never be blended; nor our own inherent Righteousness joined to

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. v. 20.



Christ's perfect Obedience. These, among other Points, not being clearly distinguished by the Minister, frequently prevents the People's growing in their Knowledge of the Truth.

3. To divide the Word, is to expatiate on the moral and preceptive Part thereof. To shew what God commands, and what God forbids. To convince the People that his Commands are not grievous, nor what He forbids unjust, but for their spiritual and eternal Advantage; since every Thing that in any Measure tends thereto, He promises freely to bestow, *For no good Thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.* \*

4. To divide the Word, is to enlarge upon the various Ordinances it appoints; such as the *reading* as well as *preaching* of the Gospel, *Praise*, *Prayer*, the *Lord's Supper*, and *Baptism*. To shew the Nature, End, and principal Design for which they were instituted, and not let the People perish for Lack of Knowledge.

5. To divide the Word, is to give every Man a Portion of Meat in due Season. A Pastor is to administer Milk to Babes, as well as give Meat to strong Men: <sup>2</sup> For this Purpose he should consult

\* *Psal.* lxxxiv. 11.    <sup>2</sup> *1 Cor.* iii. 2.

the Cases of his People, and adapt his Sermons as suitably thereto as he is capable. And in Order to be properly qualified and furnished with Materials for this End, he should make it his Business (as frequently as convenient) to visit his People, and have some spiritual Conversation with them.

It is the Opinion of Divines, that the Expression here used, *dividing the Word*, alludes to the *Levites* cutting up the Sacrifices. If this be granted, there appears great Beauty in the Metaphor; since they were dissected with great Carefulness, and distributed with the strictest Attention to the ritual Institution; so *Christ's* Servants are to open the Gospel Mysteries with much Caution and with great Regard to Scripture Appointment. *So let a Man account of us as of the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God.*<sup>1</sup>

6. To divide the Word, is to declare the whole Counsel of God, in due Season, and in proper Order. *I have not shunned to declare unto you, the whole Counsel of God.*<sup>2</sup> How can a Man make a proper Division of the Word, if he conceal any Part thereof. Of this awful Character, there are recorded, both in the Old and New Testament, some who cried *Peace, Peace, when there was no Peace,*<sup>3</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 1.  
vi. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xx. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Jer,

others,

others, who were convicted of *speaking Lies in Hypocrisy.*<sup>1</sup>

These are the general Parts into which the Word or Gospel should be divided ; and all this should be done,

1. With Faithfulness. Thus was *Moses* in God's typical House : *My Servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine House.*<sup>2</sup> And this is strictly required of every Gospel Minister, *Moreover it is required in Stewards, that a Man be found faithful.*<sup>3</sup>

2. With Affection. *So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel only, but also our own Souls, because you were dear unto us.*<sup>4</sup> Faithfulness and Affection should be inseparable ; for if they are disunited, it is more than probable, Mischief instead of Good, will be the Effect.

3. With Diligence. Not neglecting the spiritual Concerns of their Charge, *Beloved when I gave all Diligence to write unto you of the common Salvation, &c.*<sup>5</sup> *Be thou (says Solomon) diligent to know the State of thy Flocks, and look well to thy Herds.*<sup>6</sup> Indolence is by no Means consistent with the Character of *Christ's*

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Numb. xii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 2.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Jude iii.

<sup>6</sup> Prov. xxvii. 23.



true Ministers, who are to labor in Season, and out of Season.

4. With Sincerity. *For we are not as many who corrupt the Word of God; but as of Sincerity in the Sight of God, speak we in Christ.*<sup>1</sup> This is a very capital Part of a Pastor's Duty; for if the Gospel is falsely represented, or the Truths thereof artfully perverted, the Hearers are likely to lose Sight of every spiritual Advantage, and every proper Ground for Christian Confidence. Sincerity is opposed to Deceit, and so conveys a different Idea from the Conduct of those who refrained declaring the whole Counsel of God, to which, at first View, this seems to be analagous: The latter refusing to speak the Truth, because they either hate or disbelieve it, the former wilfully misrepresenting it, either to please their Auditors or gain some temporal Advantage,

5. With Zeal. *For I bear him Record, that he hath a great Zeal for you, &c.*<sup>2</sup> It is highly inconsistent with the Office of a Minister of *Christ*, to be destitute of Zeal for the Glory of his spiritual House; especially when his gracious Lord and Master declares by the Mouth of *David* his Type, that the *Zeal of the Lord's House did eat him up.*<sup>3</sup> Lukewarmness is what God abhors in any of his professing People, but more particularly in his ministering Servants.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Col. iv. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Ps/ lxix 9.

Thus

Thus Ministers should divide the Word of God with all Faithfulness, Affection, Diligence, Sincerity, and Zeal.

Further, It is not only the Work and Duty of a Pastor, to study and preach the Word, but to pray with and for the People; *Now I pray to God that do no Evil,*<sup>1</sup> says Paul to the Corinthians; and in his Address to the *Philippians*, he adds, *Always in every Prayer of mine for you all, making Request with Joy.*<sup>2</sup> In his Epistle also to the Church at *Colosse*, he informs them of his Remembrance of their Faith in Christ Jesus—*Since which*, he says, *we give Thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you.*<sup>3</sup> Writing to the *Thessalonians*, he has these Words, *Wherefore also we pray always for you.*<sup>4</sup> These Texts manifestly point out the Duty, and shew the Example of Ministers praying for the People; and not now and then, but constantly, *But we will give ourselves continually to Prayer.*<sup>5</sup> But what should they pray for in Behalf of their People? Take the following Specimen as drawn from the different Epistles.

1. That they do not wilfully commit Sin.<sup>6</sup>

2. That they may be continued in Fellowship.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. i. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Col. i. 3, 9.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Thess. i. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Acts vi. 4.

<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Phil. i. 5.

3. That

3. That they may abound in Love.<sup>1</sup>
4. That they may rest in the Hope of the Gospel.<sup>2</sup>
5. That they may be filled with the Knowledge of God's Will, in all Wisdom and spiritual Understanding.<sup>3</sup>
6. That they may walk worthy of their Vocation.<sup>4</sup>
7. That they may be strengthened with all Might, according to God's glorious Power.<sup>5</sup>
8. That they may have Patience, and long Suffering, as well as Joyfulness.<sup>6</sup>

*Lastly*, That God would give them a Testimony of his Love, and count them worthy of their high Calling, by fulfilling his good Pleasure in them, and the Work of Faith with Power; so that the Name of our Lord *Jesus Christ* may be glorified in them, and they in Him.<sup>7</sup>

To these might be added, their praying for Success on their Labors among the People; for the Presence of *Christ* in their Assemblies; and that their Discourses might be suitably adapted to their different Circumstances. But,

<sup>1</sup> *Phil.* i. 9. <sup>2</sup> *Ephes.* i. 18. <sup>3</sup> *Col.* i. 9. <sup>4</sup> *Col.* i. 10.  
<sup>5</sup> *Col.* i. 11. <sup>6</sup> *Col.* i. 11. <sup>7</sup> *2 Thess.* i. 11, 12.



III. A Pastor is to administer the Ordinances among his People, as BAPTISM and the LORD'S SUPPER.

As I have before spoken on the Nature and Design of these Ordinances, and proved them to be the standing Seals of the New Covenant, I shall only add, that as these Ordinances were given to the Church for their spiritual Provision, with a special Design, under the divine Blessing, to nourish and comfort, as well as settle and establish, the Lord's People, they should not be neglected, but carefully administered as Opportunity may offer.

Some have entered into a Controversy concerning the Administration of the Lord's Supper to a Church on the Death of its Pastor: They have supposed that the Ordinance should not be omitted, but the Pastor of another Congregation be invited to administer it to such a destitute Church. In Answer to which, I shall deliver my humble, and ingenuous Opinion, and leave others to act according to the Light of their own Reason and Consciences.

A Church of *Christ*, congregationally formed, will be allowed, on all Hands, to be an incorporated or organized Body; and that their very being so, is by Virtue of their mutual Consent and Knowledge of each

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others

others States by Communication of Experience. Thus incorporated they choose certain Officers from among themselves, to conduct their religious and secular Affairs as a Church : These Officers are themselves not chosen without Prayer to God for Direction, in which they follow the Example of the Disciples respecting the Choice of *Matthias*; and these Officers cannot act as such, though Members of the same Community, until thus set a-part. From this superficial Review of a Church's Conduct, (all of which will be granted) how incongruous is it to call in an Officer of another Church, to whose Ordination, as an Officer, they were not so much as Witness, to whose Experience they are utter Strangers, and who was never a Member of the same Community, when even those, who are for the Administration of the Ordinance, insist upon it, that both a Knowledge of Experience, and the sole Appointment of Officers (under God) is indispensably necessary for every Gospel Church distinctly to possess.

If it be allowed, that Pastors of other Churches may administer the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper to another Church, then their Call to the pastoral Office is immediately and totally subverted. To be Pastor of a Church, is to receive a Power delegated by the People (under God) to super-intend their spiritual Concerns; and every different Office he exercises; is adjunct to that Character, therefore

as

as long as he continues to be a Pastor, so long he possesses a Right to administer the Lord's Supper to the particular Church that has called him to that Office. The very Right of administering this Ordinance is inherent in the pastoral Office. Observe, even those who oppose this Sentiment allow, that if a Minister who has been ordained, leaves that Church where he was ordained, that he then is no Pastor (unless you make him Pastor of a Non-entity :) Nor would many congregational Churches invite such a Person to administer to them the Lord's Supper, however plausible his Reasons might be for quitting his Charge: Nor, what is again every where allowed, was he to receive an Invitation to the *Charge* of another Church, would he be admitted to administer the Lord's Supper, (notwithstanding his previous Ordination) until he was again set a-part to the pastoral Office. From whence, upon their own Ground of Argument, and what they most freely allow, it is apparent, that they themselves grant the Administration of the Lord's Supper, to be a Business inherent or necessarily existing in the pastoral Office.

If then this be the Case, and the pastoral Office is the particular Investment of each congregational Church, it is a fair, absolute, and unavoidable Conclusion, that they cannot administer the Lord's Supper, (as it thus adheres to the pastoral Office)

but



but where they are Pastors. If the contrary be allowed, every Conclusion drawn from the Premises must be replete with the greatest Absurdities : As for Instance, if the Administration of the Lord's Supper be inseparable from the Office of a Pastor, then it follows that wherever a Minister dispenses this Ordinance, he is at least a *temporary* Pastor. Now a Pastor of a Church, cannot be a Pastor but in his own Church, any more than a Master of a Family be a Master but in his own House. To conclude, Upon the whole, if the Lord's Supper is an Ordinance inseparable from the pastoral Office, and the Pastoral Office is limited to one Church, then is it impossible, (to act orderly) for the Pastor of one Church, to administer the Lord's Supper to another ; especially as that Office is delegated to him by the Church in Convention, an equal Delegation to which, he cannot, at the same Time, receive from any other Church.

Some have again enquired, whether a destitute Church may not choose one of their own Members to administer the Lord's Supper.

As I perfectly coincide with Dr. Owen on this Head, and as I could not have avoided expressing my Sentiments in a similar Strain, though perhaps not with equal Perspicuity, I shall take the Liberty of quoting his Judgment upon the Subject, " If the

the Church (says my Author) may delegate or substitute others for the Discharge of all Ordinances whatsoever, without Elders or Pastors, then it may perfect the Saints, and compleat the Work of the Ministry without them, which is contrary to *Ephe-sians* iv. 11, 12.—And secondly, it would render the Ministry only convenient, and not absolutely necessary to the Church, which is contrary to the Institution of it.

“ A particular Church, in order, as organical, is the adequate Subject of all Ordinances, and not essentially; because as essential, it never doth nor can enjoy all Ordinances; namely, the Ministry in particular whereby it is constituted organical. Yet on this Supposition, the Church as essentially considered, is the sole adequate Subject of all Ordinances.

“ Though the Church be the only Subject, it is not the only Object of Gospel Ordinances, but that is various. For instance,

“ 1. The preaching of the Word; its first Object is the *World* for *Conversion*; its next, *Professors*, for *Edification*.

“ 2. Baptism; Its only Object is neither the World nor the Members of a particular Church, but *Professors*; with those that are reckoned to them, by God's Appointment; that is, their Infant Seed.

“ The

“ The Supper ; its Object is a particular Church only, which is acknowledged ; one special End of it, and the Necessity of Discipline thereon depending.

“ Ordinances whereof the Church is the only Subject, cannot be administered authoritatively, but by Officers only. (1.) Because none but Christ's Stewards have Authority in and towards his House as such. (2.) Because it is an Act of Office Authority to represent Christ to the whole Church, and to feed the whole Flock thereby.

“ There are no Footsteps of any such Practice among the Churches of God, who walked in Order, neither in the Scripture, nor in all Antiquity.

“ But it is objected by those who allow this Practice, That if the Church may appoint or send a Person forth to preach, or appoint a Brother to preach unto themselves, then they may appoint him to administer the Ordinance of the Supper.

Answer. Here is a Mistake in the Supposition. That is, the Body of it, cannot send out any Brother authoritatively to preach : Two Things are required thereunto ; Collation of Gifts, and Communication of Office ; neither of which the Church, under that Consideration, can do to one that is sent forth. But where God gives Gifts by his Spirit, and a Call by his



his Providence, the Church only complies therewith, not in communicating Authority to the Person, but in praying for a Blessing upon his Work.

“ The same is the Case, in desiring a Brother to teach among them ; the Duty is moral in its own Nature, the Gifts and Call are from God alone, the Occasion of his Exercise is only administered by the Church.

“ It is further added, by the same Persons, that if a Brother, or one who is a Disciple only, may baptize, then he may also administer the Lord's Supper, being desired of the Church.

“ Answer. The Supposition is not granted nor proved, but there is yet a Difference between these Ordinances ; the Object of one being Professors as such at large ; the Object of the other being Professors as Members of a particular Church.”

I will conclude this Part of my Subject with the Words of the same learned Author, “ A Church not compleat in Order, (that is, destitute of a Pastor) cannot be compleat in Administrations ; because the Power of Administrations depends upon the Power of Order proportionably. That is, the Power of the Church depends upon the Being of the Church. Hence the first Duty of a Church, without

out Officers, is to obtain them according to Rule ; and to endeavour to compleat Administrations without an antecedent compleating of Order, is contrary unto the Mind of Christ, *That thou shouldest set in Order the Things that are wanting, and ordain Elders in every Church.*"<sup>1</sup>

Having thus delivered my free Opinion on this controverted Subject, give me Leave to add, that I mean not to enforce my Sentiment to the Prejudice of those who differ from me, nor to retain my Opinion against still more explicit Evidence. I hope I am open to Conviction, and as ready to retract, as assert. I do not mean to insist upon it, as a Point essential to the Hope, but to the Order of a Church.

Thus much for the Duty and Work of Gospel Ministers in general. There are some particular Parts of their Work which it would be unnecessary for me to expatiate upon ; such as resolving the Doubts, and instrumentally removing the spiritual Difficulties of their Charges, *The Lord God hath given me the Tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a Word in Season to him that is weary ;*<sup>2</sup> This the Church have a Right to expect since it is a Part of their Minister's sacred Employ, *For the Priest's Lips should keep Knowledge, and they,* (meaning the People) *should*

<sup>1</sup> *Is.* l. 4.      <sup>2</sup> *1 Thess.* v. 14. \

*seek the Law at his Mouth.*<sup>\*</sup> But these I leave, and I hope those of more elevated Stations, and eminent Abilities, will not be offended at the Freedom of my Thoughts upon this Subject.

This brings me to a Consideration of the Character and Duty of DEACONS, on which I must be brief, that I may not exceed my original Design of comprizing the *Church Member's Directory* in a small Book; and especially as their Character and Duties appear on the very Surface of Scripture. In order, however, to satisfy ourselves, let us revert to *Paul's Epistle to Timothy*, where we learned what respected the Character of a Pastor, and which amply sets forth that of a Deacon. And,

1. *A Deacon must be grave.* Not given to Levity, or in the least of a frothy Disposition; not ludicrous, or even idly jesting in his Conversation; or wanton and unbecoming in his common Character and Deportment.

2. *Not double tongued.* This seems to be a very necessary and peculiar Exhortation. For if a Deacon of a Church be double tongued, he may falsely represent the Cases of the poor Members, while he ap-

<sup>\*</sup> *Mal. ii. 7.*

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pears to be their Friend. The Consequences accruing from such Conduct, may be very fatal, and destructive of the Peace of the Church.

3. *Not given to much Wine*; no more than their Pastor: It is the Abuse of Liquor, not the Use of it, that makes the drinking thereof criminal.

4. *Not greedy of filthy Lucre*. Where this is the Case, their own Interest is likely to be of more Consequence to them, than the Advantage of the Community; but a good Deacon, one who acts agreeable to the Nature and Solemnity of his Office, foregoes his own Emolument (as in an official Capacity) for the Peace, Comfort, and Establishment of the Church.

5. *Holding the Mystery of the Faith in a pure Conscience*. That is, preserving the Truths and Precepts of the Gospel, in a Conscience void of Offence; not professing to believe and practise the Duties of his moral, religious, or official Character, and at the same Time his Conscience secretly accuses him of habitually committing many wilful and most notorious Violations of that Faith he professes to hold.

6. *The Husband of one Wife*. Each Deacon must have no more than one Wife living at the same Time.

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This is the Caution, as I observed, was given to Pastors, to avoid Polygamy.

7. *Such as rule their Children well, &c.* This respects in general, their being Examples to the Flock. Men in any distinguishing Office ought continually to remember, that they are as Lights set upon a Hill; therefore should, by an upright and circumspect Walk, adorn, and not disgrace their Characters.

Lastly, *Men of honest Report, full of the Holy Ghost and of Wisdom.* This general Character seems to include all that has been hinted before; or rather to illustrate it. Deacons of a Church ought not to be ignorant Persons, but Men, that having received the Holy Ghost, know properly how to conduct Matters for the Peace and Honor of Christ's Church.

*And let these, says the Apostle, also be first proved; Then let them use the Office of a Deacon being found blameless.*<sup>1</sup> A Person should not be chosen into the Office of Deacon precipitately; seeing it is an Office instituted under the Direction of the Holy Ghost, and a Charge is annexed to it, of great Moment and Consequence. They should be *proved*; that is, thoroughly known; their Tempers and Dispositions

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 10.

correspondent with the Gospel, which inculcates Love, Meekness, Sympathy, Forbearance, &c. Their moral Deportment should ever be *blameless*; irreproachable, yea ornamental.

Thus much for their Character; let us now take a View of their WORK; and here I need not enlarge.

When the Greeks complained against the Hebrews, because their Widows were neglected in their daily Ministrations, the Apostles exhorted them to select from among them proper Persons to serve the Tables,<sup>1</sup> while they devoted themselves to the more important Work of the Ministry. To serve Tables, signifies every Work or Office of a secular Nature; in which the Apostles did not think proper to be immediately active. As the Work of their Ministry in divine Things was so interesting to the People and so solemn and extensive in its Latitude; they thought it most reasonable for the People to appoint such Persons, to manage those Concerns as could safely be entrusted. Consequently they must be such, whose Characters would stand the strictest Scrutiny, and in every Respect, answer what he says concerning them to his Son *Timothy*, which we have before considered. But,

<sup>1</sup> *Acts* vi. 3.



1. Deacons are to take particular Care that their Pastor be properly and decently provided for, as to Temporals. I am aware of the Objection that may arise in the Mind of a Reader, who perhaps recollects that the Apostles labored with their Hands for their Support; but we should at the same Time recollect that they were inspired Apostles, and had not that Occasion to study so closely as ordinary Ministers. It is evident that the Ministers of the Gospel are to live by the Gospel, or in other Words, are to be supported at the Expence of the People to whom they minister in holy Things. *Let him that is taught in the Word, communicate to him that teacheth in all good Things.*<sup>1</sup>

2. They should take Care of the Widows and Poor. It was from a Jealousy of the Widows being neglected, that induced the Greeks to murmur against the Jews. The Apostles did not deny or confirm the Charge, but lest there should be any future just Foundation for such a Complaint, they spake in Favor and Vindication of the Duty; and accordingly exhorted them to nominate Persons for this Work and Business. Christ's Poor have ever been considered as the peculiar Charge of the Church; and Contributions were accordingly made for them. Thus the Apostle speaks to the Church

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 9.

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at Galatia, *Only they would that we should remember the Poor.*<sup>1</sup> But what enforces this Duty with irresistible Evidence, is the kind Notice our Lord takes of his poor Members, *For the poor ye have always with you.*<sup>2</sup> The Collection for this Purpose, was usually made, agreeable to the Apostolic Injunction, on the first Day of the Week—but whether every first Day of the Week is not clear; however this is apparent, that it is the Duty of Churches *now* to gather Contributions so often as their particular Necessities require. Those who are in comfortable Circumstances, are no more to be unreasonably drained, than the Poor are to be unkindly slighted.

3. They are to see that every Thing respecting the Lord's Supper be conducted with great Regard to the Solemnity of that Institution; together with every other necessary external Provision.

4. They are to keep, collect, and suitably dispose of the Church's Contributions; and by the most cautious Examination, search into the Grounds, Right, and Necessity of the different Applications from the Poor.

5. They are to see that no Members impose upon their Office, or claim Benefactions or Relief, while they are capable of supporting themselves by their

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 10. <sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvi. 11.

own Labor. They are only as Stewards, and therefore may no more extravagantly give away, than they may devote the Fund of the Church to their own Purposes.

6. They are to avoid Partiality in the Distribution thereof, and only communicate as the real Necessities of the Subjects require.

*Lastly*, They are to take Care that the Building, and its Appurtenances be kept in suitable Repair; and that proper inferior Servants be appointed for the Place of their constant Worship, and satisfy them for their Service. All these Particulars, as they respect outward Things, most properly belong to the Office of a Deacon; and when we consider the Temptations to which they are exposed, and the Difficulties which must arise in the faithful and impartial Discharge of the Duties of their Office, we may well say with the Apostle Paul, *For they that have used the Office of a Deacon well, purchase to themselves a good Degree, and great Boldness in the Faith which is in Christ Jesus.*\*

Thus much for the OFFICERS of *Christ's Church*, and their WORK.

Let us now briefly consider in whom the Right of choosing those Officers, "Pastors and Deacons," is

\* 1 Tim. iii. 13.



vested,—in whom the Right of admitting Members is reposed,—the Method of their Admission, and the Ground of the Church's Authority for Excommunication. As these Particulars are clearly revealed, I shall but just mention them, without much Enlargement.

I. It is clear from Scripture, that the Right and Power of choosing Officers (under God) is solely vested in the People, who form the different Societies where they are appointed. “The Apostle Paul,” says an Author, “by comparing a particular congregational Church, such as was at *Rome*<sup>1</sup> and *Corinth*,<sup>2</sup> unto the Body of a Man, sufficiently intimates, that as the Body of a Man, being entire and sound, hath complete Power within itself for all bodily Actions, and a Power over itself to purge out malignant Humors, when found therein, so a particular Church being completely organized and influenced by the Spirit of *Christ*, maketh Increase of the Body, unto the edifying of itself in Love, without the Influence of any Jurisdiction out of itself, as having sufficient Power in itself to cast out vicious and hurtful Members, without the Intervention of foreign Jurisdiction over them.”

The first Example we have recorded in Scripture of the Appointment of a Church Officer, is that of

<sup>1</sup> *Rom. xii.*

<sup>2</sup> *1 Cor. 12.*

*Matthias.* There were one hundred and twenty of the Church present when *Peter* addressed them on the Propriety of choosing a Person to the Office of a Bishop, in the Room of *Judas*, who had so basely betrayed his Lord; which Action the Apostle most beautifully comments on, and illustrates from Scripture. *And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.*<sup>1</sup> That is, the Church singled out two Persons, whom they deemed, to the best of their Judgment, suitable to such an Office: *And they gave forth their Lots, and the Lot fell upon Matthias, &c.*<sup>2</sup> Here we see that *Matthias's* Separation to this Office, was by the free Suffrages and Choice of the People.

The second Example we have of appointing Officers in *Christ's* Church is that recorded in *Acts*. *Wherefore Brethren, look ye out among you, seven Men of honest Report, full of the Holy Ghost, and Wisdom, whom we may appoint over this Business.*<sup>3</sup> The Apostle here enjoins his *Brethren* to look out from among themselves proper Persons: He would not infringe upon the natural Right of every incorporated Society to appoint its own Officers. Can any be so good Judges either of the Character and Qualifications of their Members, as they themselves; for you will observe they were to be chosen "from among

<sup>1</sup> *Acts* i. 23.<sup>2</sup> *Ver.* 26.<sup>3</sup> *Acts* vi. 3.

*themselves, and this open, disinterested Conduct, is said to have pleased the whole Multitude.\* The Manner in which this was to be done, is pointed out (by Prayer) And they prayed and said, Thou, Lord, who knowest the Hearts of all Men, shew whether of these two Men Thou hast chosen.*

II. The Right of admitting Members, likewise appears clearly from Scripture, to be reposed in the Church. They are to be Judges of the moral Meetness of Persons for their Communion. No one Church has a Right to oblige another to admit a Person as a Communicant. If a Person offers himself, the Church, according to the Spirit of the Gospel, upon having sufficient and satisfactory Evidence of his having received the Grace of God in Truth, are under an Obligation to receive him. *Him that is weak in the Faith receive ye, but not to doubtful Disputations.*<sup>1</sup> That is, "He that gives you rational and scriptural Grounds, to conclude that he is in the Faith, or in other Words, that he is interested in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Object of Faith, though he be weak, receive him, but not to doubtful Disputations. Make all reasonable Allowance for his partial Adherence, in some trivial Respects, to the Mosaic Institution; consider the Force of Education and Example, and forbear to enter

<sup>1</sup> *Acts* vi. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Acts* i. 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Rom.* xiv. 1.

into



into unprofitable Disputes concerning Meats and Drinks, &c." This seems to me to be the significant Language of that Text. It is not said, *Him that is weak in the Faith, let the APOSTLES or other OFFICERS receive*, but *receive YE*, that is the CHURCH; those who were called to be Saints, for to them was the Epistle immediately addressed.

III. The Method of their Admission into Christ's Church is equally plain from Scripture; namely, upon a Member's giving some Account of the Lord's Dealings with his Soul. It is very natural to suppose it should be so, was there no particular Example of this Mode in Scripture. In all Societies there are some Preliminaries and Articles settled, to which the Subjects proposed for Admission, are requested to acknowledge their Assent, previous to their being fully received; and surely it is reasonable, that a Number of Persons professedly joined together in sacred Communion, should be satisfied whether their Brethren coincide with them in the most important Doctrines of the Gospel, and what Experience they have had of divine Truths upon their Hearts, — and how shall this be satisfactorily known, unless they make an Acknowledgment thereof to some of the Community. Untill this is the Case, it appears, under the Sanction of Scripture, that no Person can be properly admitted into a Gospel Church.

When even *Paul* offered to join himself to Christ's Disciples, they would not admit him into their Fellowship, untill they had received a Testimony from *Barnabas* what God had wrought for him.<sup>1</sup> On his Report they most cordially received him, and he afterwards *labored more abundantly than they all.*<sup>2</sup>

Our Lord expects all his Members to make a public Declaration of his Name, and their Love to his Service. *Whoever therefore shall confess Me before Men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in Heaven.*<sup>3</sup> Most Servants of the Crown, have a particular Habit in which they appear, and by which is known in whose Service they are engaged. The Gospel requires of none of its Believers, any external Dress, to distinguish their Separation from the World, or the high Employ into which they have entered; but it expects that a Confession of the Hope it affords, an Acknowledgment of the Grace it conveys, and a Trust in its divine and glorious Declarations of Mercy, should be publicly made, when Persons profess to renounce the World as their Home, its Pleasures as their Delight, or its Friendship as their Confidence.

Thus those who were converted to the Faith of the Gospel, and were formed into a Church,—they *that*

<sup>1</sup> *Acts*, ix. 27.

<sup>2</sup> *1 Cor.* xv. 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Matt.* x. 32.

*believed, came, and confessed, and shewed their Deeds.*<sup>1</sup>

And with respect to the Hope of the Gospel, observe the Eunuch, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*<sup>2</sup> Upon which Declaration the Apostle baptized him; and on such correspondent Declarations alone, ought Churches to admit Members. So the

Apostle in another Place *If thou shalt confess with thy Mouth, the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy Heart, that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*<sup>3</sup> Even when *Peter* was writing to the

scattered Jews, he charges them ever to be ready to give a solid and satisfactory Account of the Hope they experienced. *Be ready to give always to every Man that asketh you, a Reason of the Hope that is in you,*

*&c.*<sup>4</sup> And how much more reasonable is it that Persons should publicly testify their Love to the Truth, and declare their Experience of its divine Power and Influence, when they offer themselves to the Communion of any Gospel Church. But He, who by his Spirit planted all Churches, gives us Proof and an Example from his own Lips, that He expects such Confession. *But whom say ye that I am?* Upon which the zealous and warm-hearted *Peter* answered for all his Brethren, *Thou art Christ the Son of the Living God.*<sup>5</sup> I cannot avoid noticing that remarkable Instance we have recorded in *Acts*; it is said, *They that*

<sup>1</sup> *Acts* xix. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Acts* viii. 37.

<sup>3</sup> *Rom.* x. 19.

<sup>4</sup> *1 Pet.* iii. 15.

<sup>5</sup> *Matt.* xvi. 15, 16.

gladly



*gladly received the Word, were baptized.* By which Act, and in which Ordinance, they made a public Declaration of their Faith and Hope; upon which Declaration it is said, *And the same Day there were added to the CHURCH,*<sup>1</sup> as appears from the following Verse, *And they continued stedfastly, &c.*<sup>2</sup> I might add, as an Illustration of the Propriety of Persons making a public Declaration of their Hope, the several Instances recorded in the Old as well as in the New Testament. Such as *Abraham's* building an Altar,<sup>3</sup> *Jacob's* Erection of a Pillar,<sup>4</sup> and *David's* Invitation, *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my Soul.*<sup>5</sup> All which were public Acknowledgments of what God had wrought for them; and how requisite is it, for such a Publication of the Lord's Goodness to be made to the Church, when we are proposed for Admission.

I shall conclude this Head, with saying, That the Objection which many have to Persons delivering in a written Account of their Experience, is rather trifling; the principal Part of their Objection arises from the Imposition a Church may suffer by a false Account. But surely there is scarcely any Institution, Custom, or Design, but what may be more

<sup>1</sup> *Acts* ii. 41.<sup>2</sup> *Ver.* 42.<sup>3</sup> *Gen.* xii. 8.<sup>4</sup> *Gen.* xxviii. 18.<sup>5</sup> *Psal.* lxvi. 16.

or less abused ; and should we always reject good Plans, because of their being liable to Perversion, we might renounce almost every newly proposed Scheme in a civil and political, as well as religious System. Our Objectors add, " It is not at all necessary that such written Accounts be delivered in, provided the Persons are conversed with by two of the Members." While they advance this, how exceedingly vague and insufficient does it make their first Argument, " That a Church may be imposed upon by written Accounts." Pray may not two Members of a Church be imposed upon sooner than a whole Church ; among whom it is exceedingly probable, there may be some Persons better able to convict them in concealing their Sentiments, or in disguising their sinister Profession. However this may be, we have considerably the Advantage who are for written Accounts, since besides those Accounts, the Person is conversed with by two of the Members, as well as the Pastor.

Another Objection which some raise, is, " That many have not Courage to deliver in a written Account." But what amazing Courage doth it require ? I think not so much as to converse personally with two or three Members, who may put such Questions (though plain ones) as may rather embarrass the Person ; at least more so than by penning

ning his Experience. A Person is not expected critically to enter into the nicest Distinctions in Theology, but to give a plain and scriptural Account of what he believes to be the Way of Salvation, and the Ground of his Hope towards God. Here I would just notice the ungenerous Assertion of those, who say, "That we expect them to inform us the Day and the Hour in which, and the Instrument where-  
" by they were converted." This is false, and therefore deserves no Answer.

Were we to consider the Advantages (supposing there were some small Disadvantages) of making a public Declaration of our Hope, previous to our Admission into a Church, we should most certainly be stronger Advocates for it; such as the strengthening those who are weak in the Faith, by observing the Method God has taken with others for their Establishment; the comforting those who are under any spiritual Distress, by pointing out their Deliverance; the confirming the Hope of the Believer, by attending to the wise, gracious, and marvellous Dispensations of Providence towards others, &c. But these I leave, and proceed to consider,

IV. What is the Ground of a Church's Authority for EXCOMMUNICATION. This is a Power which every Society possesses, and is very rational. If a Man enters



enters into Connection with any certain Body of Persons, counteracts their Designs by Fraud or Cunning, or if he openly violates their Order, and cannot be reformed, surely he should be expelled: And how much more reasonable is it, If a Person act in direct Opposition to the Laws of a Gospel Church (which are the Laws of *Christ*) and walk not as becomes a Member of *Christ's* mystical Body, and (after the Plan laid down by our Lord is pursued) he cannot be reclaimed, that he should be excommunicated. *Paul*, in his first Epistle to the *Corinthians*,<sup>1</sup> gives them to understand, that it was their Duty to cut off from their Communion, all such as brought a Disgrace upon the Name and Ways of *Christ*. Having declared this, he proceeds in his next Epistle, to give them Directions concerning the Restoration of such an excommunicated Person; and informs them, that their cutting him off from their Communion, was a sufficient, and the only Excommunication they had a Right to perform. The Church has no Power or divine Warrant to inflict corporal Punishments upon such offending Members: Nor has the civil Magistrate any Authority from Scripture to interfere in spiritual Discipline. *Christ's* Church is not to anathematize offending Members, nor interdict their Habitations, but should rather aim to restore them by Advice and Example. Before any Person can

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. v.

be justly excommunicated, several Steps are to be taken: These our Lord describes at large in the Evangelist *Matthew*:<sup>1</sup> He informs us, that it is our Duty, first to go and privately converse with the offending Person, and not make a public Declaration of his Crime: If he regards not the Converse, Instruction or Reproof of one Member, then that Member is to take with him another Person or two, and try if together, they cannot (by God's Assistance) impress upon his Mind a suitable Sense of his evil Conduct. — If they find their Attempts ineffectual, (and not 'till then) He orders them to tell it unto the Church; adding, *But if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen Man and a Publican.*<sup>2</sup> Here the Duty, as well as Nature of Excommunication, is clearly pointed out, and in whom alone it is vested, in Subordination to the Lord *Jesus Christ*, the great Head of the Church: — Hence the Ground of a Church's Authority for Excommunication, evidently appears to be Scripture Injunctions and Examples.

Enquiries have been made, How long Persons should remain under Excommunication after Signs of Repentance? Whether Excommunication may, and ought to be omitted in Order to prevent Trouble or any fatal Consequences, that may accrue to the

<sup>1</sup> *Matt. i. 8.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ver. 17.*

Church thereby? Whether, if a Person voluntarily withdraws himself, there is need of any Excommunication? Whether, in Case of any particular Enormity or atrocious Crime, a Person may be excommunicated without any previous Admonition? Whether such as voluntarily, and without any just Cause, withdraw themselves, ought to be excommunicated? Whether a Person may be excommunicated for Errors in Faith or false Opinion, &c.? All these Points must be determined according to Circumstances and the Nature of Things. Our Reason must be exercised in Conjunction with the positive Instructions of Scripture. Keeping the last constantly in View, we shall not be likely to fail in our Search after Truth, or in Practice.

Thus in a plain and familiar Manner, have I briefly gone through the different Branches of my proposed Plan. I freely acknowledge, that on each of the various Particulars I have mentioned, much more might have been added, without Tautology; at the same Time, I presume I may venture to hope, the general Method pursued will be more acceptable to those Persons, for whom I principally intended the Publication. — I have, through the whole, aimed at the greatest Brevity and Plainness; believing them to be the most probable Means under the Divine Blessing, of fixing a suitable Impression



of the Subject on the Understanding of the serious Reader;—and I trust there will be some Weight found in the Arguments used, some Appositeness in the Scriptures quoted, and some Propriety in the Authorities adduced.—— May He, who alone can render effectual every human Attempt to convey Instruction, command his gracious Blessing;—and to his Name be all the Glory!



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THE  
CHURCH MEMBER'S  
DIRECTORY, &c.

**H**AVING in the first Part of this Publication, endeavored to shew the Order and Discipline of a Gospel Church, and the only proper and suitable Materials for this Holy Superstructure, I shall now aim at reducing those Particulars to Practice and Experience. It is but of little Importance to hear the Truth, if we disregard it;—of awful Consequence, to know the Truth, and not to live it.

It is a solemn Thing to make a public Profession of the Name of Christ—though I, by no Means would intimate, that the Tie upon any Number of Christians, as such, *to walk circum-*  
*spectly, not as Fools, but as wise,*<sup>1</sup> is greater than

<sup>1</sup> *Ephes. v. 15.*

on others; considered as purchased by the same Blood, renewed by the same Grace, and sanctified by the same Spirit: Yet surely, all who enter into a Church-Connection ought to be particularly cautious in their Steps, deliberate in their Proceedings, and invariably conscientious in the whole of their Transactions, whether spiritual or temporal, as the Eyes of the World are ever upon them. — And more especially, when they consider the Nature and Importance of the Engagement into which they have entered; that before the whole World, in the Face of many Christians, in the Sight of Angels, and in the immediate Presence of God, they have professedly avowed their Determination, (in the Strength of Christ) to be no longer the Servants of Sin; that they are fully convinced of its awful Consequences, and its Opposition to the Purity of the Divine Nature; — of the strong and natural Propensity there is in their Hearts to run counter to the Will of God; — the absolute Necessity of that blessed Change they profess to have happily experienced, in order to a real Participation of the Divine Favor; — that they are resolved, by Help obtained of God, to avoid every unjust Procedure in Life, every unlawful Aim in the Prosecution of common Business, and in the Discharge of every moral and incumbent Duty; — and that they wish to sacrifice every former false Dependence, in Point of Acceptance with God. By such a Profession, they appear to take up Arms against every



every Thing that is Incompatible with the Glory of their Saviour, or that may, in any Degree, oppose their Progress in the Christian Life.

This is most certainly the Language of every Person's Conduct, in making a public Declaration of Faith in the Lord *Jesus Christ*; but are these serious Resolves (if genuine) the Effect of their own natural Wills, unrenewed? or, by their own Power can they be maintained? By no Means. The adorable Spirit, by his Almighty Influence, must have wrought such holy Desires in their Souls, and by his all-sufficient operative Grace alone, can they be enabled to make and keep those divine Resolutions, which will ever be productive of the fairest Fruits, to the Honor of God, to the Establishment of the Minds of others, and to the more sublime Satisfaction of their own precious and immortal Souls.

If such is thy Case, Christian Reader, how great thy Obligations to the Almighty Three! Did God the Father purpose, in the Ages of Eternity, to save thee from the Ruin and Misery to which thou wast exposed? Did He give thee in Covenant to *Jesus* to redeem? Did God the Son, in Consequence of a divine Purpose of Grace, undertake thy ruined Cause, engage to become thy Surety, and effectually save thee from the Death thou hadst merited, by being,  
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in the Fulness of Time, made Sin for you, who knew no Sin, that you might be made the Righteousness of God in Him? Did the Omnipotent Spirit assume the Province to regenerate thy guilty Soul, to renew every Power of thy Mind, to sanctify thee throughout, in Soul and Body? Did They thus engage to fulfil their gracious economical Parts, until you were brought Home to the Kingdom above, and to the full Possession of that Blessedness reserved for all those who are redeemed by the Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without Spot or Blemish? What Gratitude then is due to the Triune Jehovah, who has thus wonderfully planned, and no less gloriously executed the great Scheme of Salvation!

When we consider the Character of a Member of *Christ's* visible Church, in the important Point of View which these Reflections suggest,—it appears truly solemn and striking, however lightly it may be entered on by some, or esteemed by others; and all who sustain such a Relation, are under the most binding Obligations to walk conscientiously, both before the World and the Church of God. A few of which peculiar Obligations, I shall here briefly consider, as,

I. *The Obligations which all Church Members are under to act circumspectly in their TEMPORAL BUSINESS; and*

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 21.

II. *Their*

II. *Their Obligations to attend to all Spiritual Duties; and observe all Divine Institutions.*

In enlarging on these two Heads, I shall aim at the greatest Perspicuity and Faithfulness; and it is my earhest Wish, that the Reader would consider himself as the immediate Subject of this Address:

I. Let us consider the Obligations all Members of *Christ's* visible Church are under, to act circumspectly in their TEMPORAL BUSINESS.

Previous to this, I would just observe, that those who make a public Profession of the Name of *Christ*, should constantly attend to the Command they have received, not to set their Affections immoderately on the Things of the present uncertain Life. — *And they that buy, be as though they possessed not.*<sup>\*</sup> It may be necessary, perhaps, for me to explain what I mean by an immoderate Affection.

1. We too highly value temporal Things, when we suffer them to have so large a Share of our Thoughts, as to draw off our Attention from spiritual Objects, and prevent our serious Endeavors to attain to greater Knowledge of, and Experience in divine Truths; like those mentioned in Scripture, who *Made Light of it, and went their*

<sup>\*</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 30.



*Ways, one to his Farm, another to his Merchandize.*<sup>1</sup> How disloyal were these Subjects to the Prince, who had so freely invited them to his Banquet ; and how exceedingly undutiful were they, to make such trifling and evasive Excuses, to be exempted from attending to the free and gracious Invitations they had received ! and, for no other Reason, but to indulge themselves with uncertain, temporary Enjoyments.

The young Man in the Gospel is a very striking Instance of the dreadful Sin of neglecting the Blessings *Christ* has to bestow, for the perishing Acquisitions of this present evil Life. He professed to have kept inviolable all those sacred Commands, our Lord had propounded to him in the Form of Questions. Seeing his Self-confidence, the adorable Redeemer determined to cut deep at his false Hope, and level with the Dust his visionary Props, by saying, *If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the Poor, and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven; and come and follow Me. But when the young Man heard that Saying, he went away exceeding sorrowful, for he had great Possessions.*<sup>2</sup>

2. Your Delight, Christian, in temporal Mercies, is immoderate, and inconsistent, when what you pos-

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xix. 21, 22.

Yess, leads you either to Security or Sensuality. *And I will say to my Soul, Soul, thou hast much Goods laid up for many Years; take thine Ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*<sup>1</sup> Here both Security and Sensuality were evident. No State can be more dreadful than this—to place an inordinate Dependence on that which God can deprive me of in a Moment; or to feast luxuriously in my Thoughts, on Pleasures which are but of a very transient Nature, and, of a sudden, to be alarmed, with a Clap more awful than of Thunder, *This Night thy Soul shall be required of thee.*<sup>2</sup>

Reader, these Things are to be carefully considered; and the Examples I have produced of the Sinfulness of placing an immoderate Affection on earthly Comforts, ought to stimulate you to a close Attention to the Word of God, and induce you to fix your sole Dependence upon his Grace and Power. Your Obligations to attend to these Things, are binding upon you, as long as you continue to name the Name of *Christ*, and profess to depart from all Iniquity, — and is it not natural to suppose it should be so? Have you declared, by your Admission into the Church of *Christ*, that the World, or its Pleasures and Emoluments are not the Objects of your supreme Love; but that you

<sup>1</sup> *Luke* xii. 19.      <sup>2</sup> *Ver.* 20.

wait in pleasing Expectations of more exalted and unfading Glories? Would you wish to have both a larger Portion of this World's Good, and an Interest in *Jesus*? Do you imagine you can possess the World without a Snare? or even pass through it without an Attack from your spiritual Enemies, and entirely free from Temptation? If you thus think, you are woefully mistaken, and are not yet sufficiently instructed in *Christ's* School. - There is no Communion between Light and Darkness, with God and *Belial*.<sup>1</sup> A real Christian, however repugnant it may be to the Pride of human Nature, cannot pursue the World with Greediness; or, as if it was his only Hope. He wisely uses all lawful Means, *to provide Things honest in the Sight of all Men*,<sup>2</sup> and *to have to give to him that needeth*; and then leaves the Event with Him, who kindly superintends all the Affairs of his own People.

Having shewn what I mean by an immoderate Affection for worldly Things, I proceed to a Consideration of the Duty of Church-members to act with Uprightness in the Prosecution of their TEMPORAL BUSINESS. This may be considered in two Senses, Whether in BUYING, or in SELLING.

#### I. IN BUYING ANY COMMODITIES.

1. When you are going to deal for Goods, do not undervalue them against the Evidence of your own

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, 16.    <sup>2</sup> Rom. xii. 17.    <sup>3</sup> Ephs. iv. 28.



Conscience, *It is naught, it is naught, saith the Buyer, but when he is gone his Way, then he boasteth.*<sup>1</sup> That is, he triumphs over, either the Unskilfulness or Weakness of the Seller; and though, before his Face, he condemns the Commodity, yet on gaining his End, by taking undue Advantage, he glories. Is this like those who profess a Love to all Mankind, and who are to be as Ensamples to the gazing World, of Integrity, and just Dealing? shocking to reflect upon! Avoid such a Transaction, Believer, if you would wish to be approved of, and to be conformable to the Will and Practice of your Divine Master.

2. Do not say positively, you will not advance any Thing more for the Articles you are treating for, and then falsify your Word, and thereby give the Lie to your Conduct; unless you have been mistaken in the Quality of the Goods. This may appear a small Punctilio in the Eyes of some, but it is a notorious Sin, and highly dishonorable to a Christian Profession.

3. Do not offer less for a Commodity than its intrinsic Worth, if you know it, or aim to take Advantage of those who are in Distress, by purchasing it under the real Value. *I will give thee, says Abraham, the Worth of it in Money,*<sup>2</sup> when he was buying the Cave of *Machpelah*, of *Ephron*. Likewise *David*

<sup>1</sup> *Prov.* xx. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Gen.* xxiii. 9.

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offered to Ornan, the *Jebusite*, the real Value of his threshing-floor, *Give me the Floor, and I will give thee the full Value of it.*<sup>1</sup> The Prophet *Amos* speaks fully to this Point, and, in striking Accents, expresses the wicked Language of those, who in his Days, as well as ours, delighted in taking an undue Advantage of those who were in low and needy Circumstances, by saying, *We may buy the Poor for Silver, and the needy for a Pair of Shoes; yea, and sell the Refuse of the Wheat.*<sup>2</sup>

4. Do not refuse your Creditors their just Due, when they call upon you for their legal Demands, while you have it in your Power to discharge your Contract, *With-hold not Good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the Power of thine Hand to do it. Say not unto thy Neighbour, Go, and come again, and To-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee.* *Elisha* was so remarkably conscientious in this Respect, that, when he had miraculously made the Widow's Oil to encrease, he strictly enjoined her first to pay off all her Debts, and then informed her, that she and her Children might honorably live upon the Remainder.<sup>3</sup>

5. Do not seize, as a favorable Opportunity to wrong the Person whose Goods you are purchasing,

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chron. xxi. 22. <sup>2</sup> Amos viii. 6. <sup>3</sup> Prov. iii. 27,

28. <sup>4</sup> 2 Kings iv. 7.

his Oversight in giving you more than your Due. When *Joseph's* Father had found his Son's Money in their Sacks, he ordered them to go instantly back, *Peradventure*, says he, *it was an Oversight.*<sup>1</sup> This is truly becoming the Christian Character, and discovers that Tenderness of Conscience, which ought ever to grace the Dealings of those who profess themselves to be Members of *Christ's* visible Church: but, awful as it may be, it is an indubitable Fact, that many, who publicly profess a Love to Holiness, in transacting their temporal Concerns, consider more their worldly Interest, than the Honor of Religion, or the Glory of God.

6. Do not monopolize any valuable Commodity, so as to prejudice others, in order to aggrandize yourself: Possibly many may be so materially hurt by such Injustice, as to be rendered incapable of bringing up their Families with any Degree of Comfort. Those who engrossed Corn, in Days of old, we find were severely threatened, *He that withholdeth Corn, the People shall curse him, but Blessing shall be upon the Head of him that selleth it.*<sup>2</sup> But I now proceed to consider the Obligations Church-Members are under, to maintain, a Walk worthy of that holy Vocation, with which they profess to be called,

<sup>1</sup> *Gen.* xliii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Prov.* xi. 26.



## II. IN SELLING ANY COMMODITIES.

1. Take not any unlawful Advantages, by imposing upon either the Credulity or Ignorance of the Purchaser, *Let no Man go beyond, and defraud his Brother in any Matter; because that the Lord is the Avenger of all such, as we have also forewarned you and testified.*<sup>1</sup> What a Disgrace must such an Act bring on the solemn Declarations you have made of your Love to *Christ* and Holiness. To aver that you detest Sin, and dread its awful Consequences, and yet, when your worldly Interest is likely to be promoted, can, (it may be) without the least Remorse of Conscience, deceive your Customer, and be guilty of an absolute Fraud.

2. Do not make use of false Weights and Measures, *Divers Weights are an Abomination to the Lord, and a false Balance is not good.*<sup>2</sup> How can it be otherways than an Abomination in his Sight, who has given such a Display of his Justice, in the Salvation of a lost World by the Death of his own Son; and who has, in his sacred Gospel, commanded his People, to avoid every Species of Oppression and Deceit. *Amos* refers to this iniquitous Practice, when he accuses the People of *making the Ephab small, and the Shekel great, and falsifying the Balances, by Deceit.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 *Thess.* iv. 6.    <sup>2</sup> *Prov.* xx. 23.    <sup>3</sup> *Amos* viii. 5.

3. Do not praise your Goods above their real Value; or attempt to secret any Blemishes they may have received. To declare your Commodity is of an excellent Quality, when it is not, and thereby mislead the Judgment of the Buyer, who, it may be, places a Dependence upon your supposed Veracity, and fair Dealing, is a notorious Sin. To hide the Faults of the Articles you are selling, may also be of much worse Consequence than you imagine. Avoid, Reader, thus shamefully acting, as you would wish to escape the Pollutions and Punishment of the ungodly.

4. Do not use any unfair Means to obtain greater Profits in your Trade; such as Adulteration, or mixing any Article of a less Value with a greater, in order that you may the better dispose of it, and at the same Time sell it for genuine and pure. It may be objected by some, perhaps, who have more of the Form, than the Power of Godliness, that the Purchaser ought to make use of his Judgment; and as he may see or taste what he purchases, there can be no Sin in such Acts. I answer, whether the Person has proper Judgment or Skill, is not the Christian Seller's Business to consider. His Dealing should be the same with an Infant as with a Man; equally honest and conscientious: Therefore, when you deal, rather consider the intrinsic or reasonable Worth of the Goods you are selling, and inform the Buyer, if

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there is any Adulteration, that he be not deceived for Want of Discernment. However opposite such Conduct may be to the Minds of many, yet it is this Department in Trade, that alone can bear the Sanction of Scripture. *Isaiah* reproves the People with an Allusion to this unfair Dealing, *Thy Silver is become Dross, thy Wine mixed with Water.*<sup>1</sup> To reduce an Article in which you deal from its primitive Goodness, in order to make more Gain thereby, is even, in a moral Point of View, an ungrateful Act. The same may be equally and justly said of false Coin, knowing it to be so. To gain by my Customer, and then defraud him for his Favours, by wilfully passing upon him bad Money, or adulterated Goods, is truly a base Act, and ought to be constantly refrained from, as totally opposite to the Relation you stand in as a Member of a Christian Church.

5. Do not combine with any Set of avaricious Men, to enhance the Price of any Article, when there is no apparent Reason or Necessity for so doing, but only to answer their mercenary Ends: All who thus act, I would have remember, that what they now possess, is but, at longest, of a short Duration; and may, by some solemn Providence, be much shorter than they promise themselves,—and then, what awful Reflections must their Minds be

<sup>1</sup> *Isaiah* i. 22.



filled with, on a Death-bed, from a Review of their many Oppressions.

6. Do not be so anxiously concerned about temporal Things, as to trade on the Lord's Day. There were those the Prophet informs us, that continually cried, *When will the new Moon be gone, that we may sell Corn; and the Sabbath, that we may set forth Wheat.* If you think the Services of the Sabbath a wearisome Employ, and are wishing for the Return of the common Days of the Week, that you may resume your worldly Concerns, you had better renounce your Profession, and at once declare to the surrounding World, that you are determined to pursue its Gains, with all possible Avidity:—Far be it from the Christian Professor hypocritically to go to the House of the Lord, and there sit as his People sit; and thus deceive Mankind, and without Repentance, eventually lose his own Soul, for the base End of obtaining more worldly Riches. Oh! Sirs, Riches are an ensnaring Thing; and he who possesses them, ought earnestly to pray to the Lord, to strengthen his Mind by divine Grace, that they may not have too great an Influence over him.

Reader, what think you of these Things? Are they not Matters that ought to be seriously consider-

*2<sup>d</sup> Amos viii. 5.*

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ed ? For *Christ's* Sake ; for your own Soul's Sake, here make a Pause, and ask yourself such Questions as naturally arise from the various Parts of the present Subject. Self-Examination indeed is not a pleasing Work to Nature ; and Men had rather make a thousand trifling Excuses, than, with Seriousness and Impartiality, search into the genuine Workings of their Minds, or see how nearly they have acted agreeable to the Gospel of *Christ*, in their social Connexions and temporal Business. However true this may be of thy Case, for once let me beseech you, in the Name of my adorable Saviour, in whose Presence you are now reading, to retire to his Throne, and pray for divine Instruction. Beg of Him to open to you the Door of your Heart, that you may see all the Works of Imagery, with which it is crowded ; your horrid and blasphemous Thoughts ; your evil and unjust Surmises ; your swarming Corruptions ; your Pride, Envy, Malice, Strife, Hypocrisy, and what is the cursed Fountain from which all these spring, Unbelief. Thou wilt then say, upon such a Discovery, “ Oh ! my Soul, how hast thou been deceiving thyself, with empty Notions of thine Uprightness and Integrity ? How hast thou been walking in a vain Shew, and before the World appeared as a very excellent Christian, and yet what a Sink of Iniquity is within ? How very unbecoming thy Christian Name, and inconsistent with thy Character, hast thou frequently acted ? Good Lord !

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have Mercy on my guilty Soul, and blot out, from thy Remembrance, mine innumerable and aggravated Transgressions ! Let them never rise up in Judgment to condemn me, but cast thou them as a Stone into the Depths of the Sea." These will be the Breathings of thy Spirit, the more you see the evil Propensity of your Nature, notwithstanding your Desire to be the Lord's. Temptations will incessantly encompass you, and, unless you are preserved by rich Grace, will too often prevail over you.

Some may think, that I have here mentioned Particulars too shocking to be found in the Conduct of Church-Members, and hardly probable. I acknowledge it ; but at the same Time, I must, as faithfully declare, that they are too true, and that many thus dreadfully sport with their religious Profession. The Lord forbid it should be thy Case, Reader ; but if it is, may He alarm thy Soul by the Force of Conviction, and by his infinite Power, keep you blameless through Faith, unto eternal Salvation.

II: Let us consider the Obligations CHURCH-MEMBERS are under to attend to all SPIRITUAL DUTIES, and observe all DIVINE INSTITUTIONS. I shall begin with SOCIAL PRAYER.

ON



## ON SOCIAL PRAYER.

Christian Reader, if you would wish to conform to the Will of your Divine Master, you will be ever ready to attend to this pleasant and profitable Exercise. It is certainly one of the most glorious Sights our Eyes can behold, — A Number of Christians meeting together, to lay open their Hearts and spread their general Cases before Jehovah, a God in Covenant. The Promises made to such, who observe to this Duty, ought to be a strong Incitement to Believers, to be frequent in their Attendance upon it. *And again, I say unto you, if two of you shall agree on Earth as touching any Thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the Midst of them.*<sup>1</sup> What an encouraging Promise is this! Surely no Set of Men, who stood in Need of any particular Favor from an earthly Sovereign, would be backward to join together, in order to apply for its Grant, had they so certain and absolute an Assurance of its Bestowment, as hath the Christian, of a free and gracious Pardon of all his Sins, a complete Justification of his Person, in the Righteousness of *Christ*, and a certain Degree of Support, equal to all the various

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 19, 20.

Difficulties with which he is to encounter, in the Course of his Christian Warfare.

By SOCIAL PRAYER is always understood those Petitions that are offered up to God, by any Number of Professors (whether Church-Members or others) who meet for the Ends of confessing their Guilt and Unworthiness, imploring the free Pardon of their Iniquities, supplicating the Continuation of every forfeited Favor, and deprecating those Judgments, that (from a View of their base Ingratitude) they have too much Reason to fear are impending. This is what I mean to intimate relative to Social Prayer; whether it be performed on Days of public Worship, by the whole Church, or whether it be engaged in by a select Society.

Having aimed to prevent my Reader from misapprehending this Department of the *Church-Member's Directory*, I proceed to consider the Pleasure and Profit of this delightful Exercise.

The Pleasure, Christian, if thou knowest any Thing of the divine Life, is not fully to be expressed. It is best, and indeed alone, understood, by an appropriating View of our own personal Interest in those precious Promises, which we have a scriptural

tural Right (if Believers) to plead at our Father's Throne. I pray, that both you and I, may have more of this happy Experience, which is Heaven commenced below, and will be found to be more and more so, the higher we arrive in a Knowledge of our union to the Lord *Jesus Christ*, who is both our Elder Brother and High-Priest; in which last Character, he is ever offering up our Prayers to his God, and our God; to his Father, and our Father, as the unwearied Intercessor of His redeemed.

Many are the Examples we have in Scripture of those who attended to this Privilege and Duty. We find that the Friends of *Peter*, when he was confined in Prison, assembled together, and joined in Prayer for him; *And Prayer was made without ceasing, by the Church for him.*<sup>1</sup> What was the Consequence? Why, when *Herod* conceived that his Prisoner was well secured by the vigilant Watches, and unremitting Care of his veteran Soldiers, *Peter* received Orders, by a divine Messenger, to *gird himself, put on his Sandals, and follow him*; <sup>2</sup> with which Command he instantly complied, to the Astonishment and Confusion of his most inveterate Enemies.

We likewise find, that after our Lord's Ascension, a small Number of his Followers esteemed it their

<sup>1</sup> *Acts* xii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ver.* 8.



indispensable Duty, to join together in an humble Invocation of the Divine Blessing upon, and Presence with them. *These all continued with one Accord in Prayer and Supplication.*

Many other Instances of Persons who chearfully embraced Opportunities of joining in social Prayer, might be adduced ; but the two already cited, are sufficient Evidences, both of the Reasonableness and Propriety, and of the Advantage that frequently accrues from a serious and conscientious Observation thereof. To assemble with a Number of those who love the Interest of our common Lord, for the Purposes I have before hinted, and there be enabled to pour out our Souls before Him, as Children would with Readiness disclose their necessitous Circumstances to affectionate Parents, frequently produces that refined Pleasure, which is not to be conceived of, by any who are Strangers to the Covenants of Promise ; and who, as yet, have never felt the renovating Power and Influences of the adorable Spirit.

You profess, Believer, by your Christian Connexion, to be desirous of more sensible Evidences of your Interest in the Lord's *Christ* : And how would you obtain them, but by a constant Attendance upon every Ordinance appointed to promote

*Act. i. 14.*

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the Glory of God, and contribute to this happy End? It has been said, and no Doubt experienced by thousands of God's People, that they have frequently found their Hopes so languid, their Faith so weak, their Love so cold, their Evidences so clouded, and their Conceptions of Divine Things so confused and inconsistent, that they have been scarcely able, either to engage in Prayer themselves, or to join with others; but when a Christian Brother has been enabled, with Power and Freedom, to express their Cases and Conditions before the Lord, they have suddenly found their Faith invigorated, their Hope enlivened, and Divine Peace and Pleasure secretly pervade their whole Souls.

What is here said of Social Prayer, cannot with Propriety, be argued in Favor of Closet Duty. Let me not be mistaken in this Particular, as if I meant to insinuate, that one Duty was more precious than another: Far be it! All Duties and all Privileges are alike sweet and profitable, provided the God of Ordinances is graciously pleased to be with us in them: What I immediately allude to, is, the peculiar Blessing that so repeatedly attends Social Prayer, which cannot be experienced in private. As for Instance: Some Individual, in a Society, may have his Thoughts so directed, and be so happy in his Expressions, aided by the  
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HOLY SPIRIT, as to communicate something of the same pleasing Frame, to those joining with him in that special Privilege. However drooping their Hopes of Heaven, and cool and indifferent their Desires after spiritual Things, by thus meeting with those whose Experience, at certain Seasons, hath been more enlarged and pleasant, they have received unexpected Comfort, and been happily extricated from that lukewarm State, into which their Souls had miserably fallen. By this Means, they have been fired with Zeal for the Honor of their exalted Redeemer, and have been released from a Burden of spiritual Distress; which, while labored under, incessantly corroded the Mind, and might have led the Soul, if not prevented by supporting Grace, from discouraging Apprehensions, to desponding Doubts, until absorbed in the most direful Depths of Darkness and Distress.

Now this cannot be the Fruit of private Prayer, though a delightful Duty; because there are no Fellow-Christians present, to express, under a feeling Sense of their Helplessness, their Desire to be the Lord's, and in affecting Expressions of true Humility, to add, "Here are we, Lord! Do with us as seemeth good in thy Sight."

Has not this been thy Experience, Christian? Wilt thou then refrain assembling with those who



love to have Recourse to their Father's Throne, and to be calling upon Him for Grace and Mercy? This Duty is a Kind of Stimulus, exciting ardent Desires after a greater Conformity to *Christ*; producing a chearful Submission to his Sovereign Will, and a happy Acquiescence, — yea, a holy rejoicing, in every Dispensation.

Now, the more you reflect upon your Character, as a Member of *Christ*'s militant Church, the more you will see the Obligations you are under to attend to this gracious Privilege. Persons (though godly) who make not so large and splendid a Profession, as possibly you do, are not so remarked by the World, or so noticed by Professors. — Such go on, with a secret Pleasure in the Ways of God, unknown to thousands of their Fellow-Christians: They seem, indeed, to be buried in Obscurity, but shortly they will rise to the truly awful Confusion of all false CHURCH-MEMBERS, and be seated by the Side of their exalted Redeemer.

To this may be added, Christian, your Engagement to assist in all social Meetings (when Business permits) that may be called by the Church you are a Member of, for the Ends of helping each others Faith, imploring the peculiar Directions of God, either in Church Transactions, — in devising Means to spread his Gospel, — or in Behalf of the Nation  
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when any particular Occurrence may summon your more immediate Regard.

The Remissness which many Church-Members discover in the first of these different Branches of their Duty, — That of attending CHURCH-MEETINGS, cannot be thought of, but with real Grief. They seem, by their Conduct, to think they are not under any Kind of Obligation to assemble on working Days with their Fellow-Members; but that it is sufficient for them to meet for religious Worship on the first Day of the Week; as if, in Fact, they only sustained the Name of Church-Members to answer some private or personal Views; or at least, as if it was an Honor to be a nominal Member of a Church, but irksome to be a real Follower of *Christ*. If this is thy Case, Reader, may Conviction thoroughly pierce thy Mind, that thou mayest no longer continue in the Neglect of a Duty, which has so remarkably contributed to the divine Consolation of Numbers of God's People, for many Ages of the Church.

Relative to Church Transactions, such as censuring those who walk disorderly, choosing Officers, &c. little, I hope, need be said: It is absurd to suppose there can be a Propriety in that Person's Conduct, who neglects to join in social Prayer on such Occasions. To reprove those who backslide,  
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without first asking Wisdom of God, is Presumption. Who of us, when we take a just Survey of our own Failings, and Dispositions, can lay our Hands upon our Hearts, and say, "I am capable of giving Reproof, as becomes the Gospel of *Christ*, in all Meekness and Love." Besides, what Right have we to expect a Blessing? We profess to believe, that all Conversation and Reproof will be null and void, if the Holy Spirit opens not the Heart of an offending Member to receive it; and how can we expect his divine Aid and Blessing, if we join not together to ask his sacred Presence with us, when we enter upon such solemn Business? *For this I will be enquired of by the House of Israel,*<sup>1</sup> said the eternal Jehovah.

Previous to the Choice of OFFICERS in *Christ's* Church, you should also ever attend to this Duty. We find, that when MATTHIAS was to be chosen a Servant in the Lord's House, the rest of the Apostles had Recourse to Prayer, to know the Will of the Lord, respecting him and *Barsabas*.<sup>2</sup> And so should all connected with a Church, assemble to join in Social Prayer, for Wisdom to guide, and Impartiality to influence them, in the whole of their Proceedings, when they design to elect any of their Brethren to an OFFICIAL Character.

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Acts i. 23.



To express a Desire of spreading the Gospel of *Christ*, and of diffusing the Knowledge of his Salvation, and yet refuse to join in SOCIAL PRAYER, is a Solecism; and no seriously reflecting Person would let drop from his Lips so glaring an Absurdity. In order to disperse the Knowledge of the Lord into different Parts of the Globe, you should join with your Fellow-Christians in praying for Direction, to adopt the most probable Means to effect this blessed End; and not indifferently say, "*The Lord speed the Gospel.*" Shew yourself active in this heavenly Work; hesitate not to encourage those, with whom you are spiritually connected, to meet often for Prayer, that your Desires, for this valuable Purpose, may be happily answered. We have often seen that a divine Blessing has attended such Exercises; which should be constant Encouragement to the Believer, to tread the same Path, and to continue to persevere in the Work, to which he has once set his Hand.

Likewise as a Member of *Christ's* Church, you should socially pray for a sanctified Use of all national Mercies, and Calamities; whether Victories obtained in Time of War, over arbitrary Enemies; a peculiar Abundance of providential Blessings in Nature, or awful Distresses from Inundations, Famine, epidemical Disorders, &c. These are all Subjects of Prayer; and, whenever we experience them,

them, should induce us to apply to God for a proper and sanctified Use of them.

I might here enlarge upon each of these particular Grounds for Social Prayer, and produce similar Instances from the Holy Scriptures; but I should then exceed the original Intention of bringing this **DIRECTORY** into a small Compass.

Having, in a concise and plain Manner, aimed to set forth the Pleasure and Profit, as well as Duty of **SOCIAL PRAYER**, in its various Branches, I shall now advance a few Thoughts upon the Duty of **FAMILY PRAYER**.

### Of **FAMILY PRAYER**.

There can be no Need to explain what I mean by **FAMILY PRAYER**; though, indeed, it is an old fashioned and almost obsolete Phrase. However, those who have joined themselves to any Church, where the Gospel is clearly preached, must know, that this Duty consists in Persons calling their Families together, to join in that most reasonable Service.

I scarcely know a greater or more important Duty than this; especially if we consider it in its utmost

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Latitude. The Resolution of *Joshua*, should be the holy and permanent Resolve of every professing Head of a Family; and if the Advantages arising from a due and conscientious Discharge of it, were more seriously considered, I cannot think it would be so awfully neglected, as it is in this Day of Degeneracy and Corruption.

One Reason, I really believe, why Masters of Families do not maintain this Order in their Houses, is a Consciousness of their own irregular Walk and Deportment. If such thou art, Reader, I pray thee to pause one Moment, and consider thy dreadful Condition. Woe be to thee, if thou continuest in the Neglect of this sacred Duty. Remember the Souls of your Children and Servants are under your immediate Care and Protection; and it is your indispensable Business to take every necessary Step, to bring them (if unconverted) to a Knowledge of their State, by Nature and Practice, and shew them the Necessity of an Interest in a risen Lord. If they die without this Instruction, their Condemnation will lie at your Door; and the Torments you may feel hereafter, will be ten thousand fold more intolerable, when you reflect upon the miserable State, into which you have been the awful Instrument of bringing your Children and Servants. I sincerely feel for, and pity all such senseless and inconsiderate Fathers and Masters; and earnestly pray for their Conversion, who attend



not more seriously to their own Salvation, or the Salvation of their Families.

It may be urged by some, that they have not Gifts to engage in Prayer before their Families. But this Argument favors of Cowardice, and bespeaks the Objector to be destitute of a zealous Heart. Would you, forbear to solicit a Favor to be conferred on you which you had Reason to believe would be instantly granted, upon your petitioning an earthly Parent, before a small Company, because you could not address him in the most sublime Language? No, surely. Why then should you refuse to pray before your Family? They are under your Command, and not you under theirs: Therefore, if any behave indecent, and seem to ridicule your Gifts, and they cannot be reclaimed (which you should first aim at) then discharge them from your Service.

But I fear, the Reluctance to set up, and maintain *Family Prayer*, arises from a worse Principle; even from Indolence. The first Objection hath been generally acknowledged to have no Weight; — since, if Persons were constantly to engage in this Duty, they would improve their Gifts for the Exercise; and be able, by a little Attention, to express themselves with some Degree of Enlargement and Precision; frequently with Pleasure to themselves,  
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and with Profit and Consolation to others: This would certainly be the Case; but Professors Minds are either too much engrossed with the Things of Time and Sense, or they are too indolent and careless in spiritual Matters.

Let us take a transient View of the blessed Advantages that may accrue from an Observation of this Duty.

I have heard the following Story of an eminent Servant of God, who always supported this Order in his House. A Gentleman from a distant Country, came to pay him a Visit for a few Weeks. When the Evening advanced, the *Holy Scriptures* were called for, and the Stranger was informed, that it was the Custom of the Family to assemble together Morning and Evening, to engage in the Duties of reading the Holy Scriptures and Prayer. The Person was so greatly struck at this unexpected Piece of Information, that he could make no Answer; and, when they came to kneel down, was at a Loss how to act;—whether he was to sit still, stand up, or kneel with the Company; until by a Motion of the Master's Head, he understood he was to follow their Example. He continued to join with that Family in their Morning and Evening spiritual Sacrifices, for some Time; when the Lord was pleased, in his Sovereignty, to hear the Petitions that were offered up

for him, and he was eventually brought to a saving Knowledge of the Gospel of *Christ*.

What Encouragement ought this to afford every godly Head of a Family, to be vigilant in the Maintenance of this high and inestimable Privilege. And indeed, I cannot see how real vital Religion can be supported in any House, where this Duty is neglected, or this Privilege despised. Families ought to be little Nurseries for the Church ; where Children and Servants should be instructed in Righteousness, and trained up for the Kingdom of *Christ*. If you would have your Children be a Happiness to you, an Honor to their own Characters, and an Ornament to the Religion of *Jesus*, let them have the earliest Opportunity of seeing you, as their Parent, walking agreeable to the Gospel of *Christ*, in this, as well as other Respects. Impress their tender Minds with a deep Sense of the Obligations, as Creatures formed and preserved by the Divine Hand, they are under to the LORD of universal Creation ; but more particularly, how greatly they are indebted to the Riches of Divine Grace, for the Redemption of their Souls from Misery and Death, if they are so happy as to be interested in the dear Redeemer.

It is often owing, to the dreadful Neglect of FAMILY PRAYER, that we see so many promising Youths suddenly fall a Prey, if not to their own



own evil Lusts, yet to the hypocritical Arts of designing Professors; and from one Sin, they have been awfully left to go on to another, until they have fallen into every Species of Iniquity. If then, Christian, you would guard against these horrid Consequences, fail not to carry on this Duty; not in a mere formal Manner, (as some do) but with a Zeal for the Glory of God, and the spiritual Welfare of your dear Children: Likewise, if you wish your Servants to execute your lawful Commands, and with Fidelity dispatch your Business, forget not that this is an Ordinance, which, in the Hand of the Spirit, may contribute greatly to answer your most sanguine Wishes. How can you expect them to pay due Regard and Obedience to your Orders, while you profess to love the Cause of CHRIST, and yet forbear to call them together, to ask his Divine Blessing on your and their Transactions in Life. They will, if Persons of any Reflection, see that you do not act circumspectly, or consistent with your Profession; and may, in Consequence, pay little Attention to your most reasonable Injunctions.

There is nothing so attracting as a good Example; and when Servants have observed that their Master conducts himself with Uniformity; that he is the same Man, whether you see him in the Church, or upon the Exchange; whether at the Table of the LORD, or in his Business; whether in a religious Society,

Society, or in his Family, they have been frequently won by such a regular and becoming Walk; have admired the Grace that wrought the divine Work, and longed for the same blessed Experience.

This has been often verified; and the Lord's Arm is not shortened, that He cannot still work the same glorious Effects. But, if you constantly absent yourself from your Family of an Evening, when you have no Occasion, — keep unseasonable Hours, mix with idle and dissolute Company, and return Home, if not intoxicated, utterly unfit to call your Family to Prayer; — what then must your Children and Servants conceive of such a professing Master, who thus wounds *Christ* in his own House, while he professes to be one of his Friends!

This Duty should be performed constantly, Morning and Evening. No small or trifling Circumstances should prevent your Attention thereto. If your House has remained secure from the Hands of Violence, and if devouring Flames have not consumed your Substance, or any awful Calamity laid waste your Dwelling, or destroyed your Property, — how reasonable is it that you should call your Family together to make your joint Acknowledgments of those great Favors? Or, if you have met with any, or all of those dire Distresses, you should

should beg a sanctified Use of them; and then they may (whatever Aspect they at present wear) eventually produce the richest Blessings. On the contrary, how unreasonable is it, for you to expect the superintending Power of the Lord to guard and protect you and yours, in the silent Hours of Midnight, from any of the above unhappy Circumstances, when you assemble not together, to call upon his Name, supplicate his Blessing, and deprecate his Judgments? Or, how can you plume yourself upon the Hopes and Expectations of Success in your just Callings, when you implore not Wisdom to direct, and Grace to uphold you, in the Prosecution of them? It is highly sinful, and unbecoming the Name and Character of a MEMBER of CHRIST'S CHURCH, to live in the Neglect of this Duty.

If, by your setting up, and continuing to maintain Prayer in your Family, you should be instrumental of the Conversion of one ungodly Child, or Servant, what a Felicity must it yield you? or if by your religious Conversation and upright Walk, you should lead them to the LORD JESUS, what an inexpressible Enjoyment must it necessarily afford to your Mind, while you travel through this Wilderness to Mount Zion above. What high and sublime Pleasure will it produce, when you are quitting the passing Scenes of human Life! Your Language, your Looks, your serene and peaceable Moments,  
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may prove it, if you are in Possession of your Faculties, at that trying Period.

“ There (will you be ready to say) stands my dear Child, with whom I have so often discoursed on divine Subjects; which whom I have so frequently joined in FAMILY PRAYER; and who was, by that very Mean, savingly instructed in the good Things of God.” Or, “ There stands my faithful Servant, who once a Stranger to himself, and to his God, is now in a Degree acquainted with both; many Times have we joined together in Prayer; yea, the Mean of his Conyerfion was an Attention to that Duty, as maintained in my Family, of which I am now taking my last Farewell; E’er long they shall be where I am going; and as we have joined together in Prayer here, we shall then, with one Accord, join in Praise and ascribe Salvation, Might, Majesty and Power, to Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.”

Much more might be added (without Tautology) on this incumbent Duty of every Christian; all the trifling Objections against it, be fully answered; and a Variety of Testimonies, in Favor thereof, adduced from the Sacred Scriptures, and from the Example of many exemplary Christians, in different Ages: But too copious an Enlargement militates against my Plan.

Plan. I therefore proceed to the next special Duty, in its natural Order.

### Of PRIVATE PRAYER.

THIS, Believer, is one of the highest Privileges you are favored with; and, considered as such, ought to be very seriously attended to. You should frequently retire from the World, and in Secret open your Heart to God. Nothing tends more to excite holy Desires in our Souls, and to fill our Minds with heavenly Love, as when we are enabled to draw near to our Father's Throne, and with Humility express our Wants, confess our Sins, and return our hearty Thanks for his unmerited Favors.

I believe the spiritual Distress which many frequently experience, when they engage in this Duty, is a great Mean of preventing them from more closely observing it. But this is wrong, and highly inconsistent with the Character of a Christian, whose Business is always to be waiting at the Footstool of his Father's Throne, who peradventure hath a peculiar and special Blessing to bestow. Do not think, Believer, the Lord is to answer immediately upon your Call. He is to be patiently waited on, 'till in his Sovereignty he pleases to notice your Requests, and send an Answer of Peace to your ardent Petitions. *“ Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently*  

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for him.<sup>1</sup> What is the blessed Fruit of such a patient Waiting? *I waited patiently for the Lord, and he inclined unto me, and heard my Cry.*<sup>2</sup>

The compassionate Saviour, who delighted to instruct his Family, in every Branch of their Duty, failed not to prescribe Rules for their better Performance of this Service;<sup>3</sup> and gave them that most excellent Directory for Prayer, commonly called "THE LORD'S PRAYER." He hath told you, Believer, the very Place where this Duty ought to be performed, "*In the Closet,*" With Secrecy. What is to be avoided; "*Vain Repetitions.*" And lastly, the Manner in which it ought to be performed.

Each of these Particulars afford a Subject for your Reflection; and may, in the Hand of the Divine Spirit, be a Mean of helping you in this pleasant Exercise.

1. Here is expressed to us the Place most proper and convenient for Private Prayer, THE CLOSET. Our Lord, I imagine, termed it A CLOSET, either in Contradistinction to any Place of public Resort, or, to its Performance in public Worship; or, in

<sup>1</sup> *Psal.* xxxvii. 7.    <sup>2</sup> *Psal.* xl. 1.    <sup>3</sup> *Matt.* vi. 5, 23.



Families. That it signifies nothing more than a Place of Secrecy, I think is evident from the illustrious Examples we have of those who ever attended to this precious Duty. *Isaac* went into a Field,<sup>1</sup> *Jesus* into a Mountain,<sup>2</sup> and *Peter* to the House-top.<sup>3</sup> Oh! to leave the anxious Cares and Hurries of a perishing World, to quit the Scenes of Vanity and Vexation, and fly to God in Secret, and there be blessed with the sweet Visitations of his spiritual Presence, is truly divine; and that Person, who is the most conscientious in the Observance of this inestimable Privilege, enjoys the most of Heaven. He truly knows what Communion with the Lord means, and has many happy Preludes of that eternal Glory which awaits the Believer in *Jesus*.

Every one, who has tasted that the Lord is gracious, knows the Propriety of calling upon Him in Secret. Can you, Christian, express your every Want before your Fellow-Creatures? Can the careless Professor without the least mental Reservation, confess his most notorious Sins? Can you faithfully acknowledge the Blasphemy of your Thoughts? Yea, can you freely mention any particular Acts of Sin you have been guilty of; No?

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxiv. 63.<sup>2</sup> Luke vi. 12.<sup>3</sup> Acts vii. 10.

you cannot! But when you retire to your CLOSET, and no one sees but your heavenly FATHER, from whom you can secrete nothing, then, with what deep Sorrow for, and Hatred to Sin, are you frequently enabled to confess your Sinfulness and Demerit: With what a heart-felt Sense of bestowed Favors, both spiritual and temporal, do you acknowledge your Reception of them! With what Earnestness of Soul do you then petition for Grace to support you under every external Temptation, for Strength to resist every Attack of your spiritual Enemies, and for Wisdom to avoid their subtle Designs!

Such who have had much Experience in divine Things, have ever acknowledged the Usefulness, as well as Pleasure, of CLOSET Duty; and, convinced of the solid and rational Advantages resulting therefrom, have asserted (and to my own Knowledge their Assertion has been awfully verified) that the first Declension of true Religion, or Godliness, generally begins with a Neglect of this Duty: Therefore, Christian, expect much Temptation to lay it aside. The Enemy of Souls will, no Doubt, be busy with his horrid Injections at the very instant of your Engagement in this Duty. He will possibly whisper the most terrible Things to thy Soul, and infamously bring Scripture to confirm every Accusation; sometimes saying, "You are a Hypocrite, because

because you are praying for Things you do not desire," *And the Hope of the Hypocrite shall perish.*<sup>1</sup>

"You are mocking the Almighty, because you tell him, you desire to be devoted to his Service, at the same Time are thirsting after the Pleasures and Profits of this Life." *Judas covenanted with the Priests to betray Christ for thirty Pieces of Silver.*<sup>2</sup>

"You only pray out of mere Form." *Ye observe Days and Months, and Times, and Years.*<sup>3</sup> "You utter Falsehoods in your Prayer; and have lost that feeling Sense of God's Presence you used formerly to enjoy." *Speaking Lies in Hypocrisy:*<sup>4</sup> And he may add, "God has left you, and therefore you had better forbear calling upon Him, and freely partake of the Pleasures of this Life."

Such like Thoughts will he often suggest to you, when you are upon your Knees; but by no Means give up; continue to pray: *They that wait on the Lord shall renew their Strength;*<sup>5</sup> There are Responses sufficient for you to make, in opposing his evil Injections. You may answer for one and all; That you mourn over your past Hypocrisy, Mockery, Formality, and Falsehood, but that you now trust the Lord, who is a God of infinite Mercy and Love, will pass over your Unworthiness, and

<sup>1</sup> Job viii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxvi. 14, 15.

<sup>3</sup> Gal.

iv. 10.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. iv. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. xl. 31.



took upon you in and through his dearly beloved Son.

The Propriety of our Saviour's appointing the CLOSET, or Place of Retirement for frequent Prayer, therefore appears evident; as we cannot express ourselves with so much Freedom before a Company or Family of Persons, as when we retire to the Lord in Secret.

2. But further; You see what is to be avoided in your Addresses at a Throne of Grace; "VAIN REPETITIONS." And our Lord adds, as a Comparison, *Such as the Heathens use*, who indeed thought they should be certainly heard at all Times, and in all Places, for the Multitude of their Expressions, and Number of idle Ceremonies; but, your Covenant God, Christian, as his Mercy first bestowed was sovereign, so the Continuance of his Grace and Favor is equally undeserved; and consequently cannot be more obtained by any prolix Phrases, or Multiplicity of Words in the Duty of Prayer.

Although God has said, *I will be enquired of by the House of Israel,*<sup>\*</sup> it by no Means intimates, that He needs to be informed of every, the most minute Oc-

<sup>\*</sup> Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

currence (as to our View of Things) that takes Place; or that He is desirous the Believer should recollect all his particular and numerous Wants. The Design of such a solemn Declaration of his Pleasure was to teach us, that He would have us ever remember the Fountain of all our Mercies, and the great and only Object of our Dependence. If you was more to consider this Point, Christian, you would feel more Submission to your Father's Will, more solid Pleasure in your own Mind, and be led to say, with the utmost Tranquility of Soul, AMEN, to every Dispensation, both of Providence and Grace.

Nothing has a more awkward Appearance, nor does any Thing tend more to cool our warmest Affections, than using a Number of unnecessary Repetitions in the Duty of Prayer. It seems as if we thought the Lord was forgetful of his People, and stood in great Need of having our Cases and Requests repeated to Him; and it may be considered as a Proof of the Spirit of the Lord being absent from us; and that He is not, by his gracious Influences, interceeding within us, *by Groans that cannot be uttered.*<sup>\*</sup>

Possibly, some humble Souls may be rather distressed at what I have now said; and because they

<sup>\*</sup> Rom. viii. 26,

cannot pray with a Degree of Fluency, or express their Cases before the Lord, without some Repetitions, conclude the Holy Ghost is utterly withdrawn from them; that all their Prayers are of no Avail, and that therefore they had better decline the Duty. This Thought is the horrid Suggestion of the Father of Lies, who would fain have you give up this, your best Weapon — but write not bitter Things against yourself: The Point before us is clear; and every Difficulty, arising from such a Supposition, easily solved. There is a vast Difference between the Repetition of a Request, when Want of a Gift in Prayer, frequently leads us to it; and the vain Repetitions of a Person, who really thinks them expressive of his Earnestness, and to demand the more immediate Attention of the Lord, — who detests all such idle Babblers, *as He giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not.*<sup>1</sup>

It is not merely the Repetition of the Expression, our Lord alludes to, but the Thought of the Heart and Design of the Person who engages in the Duty: This appears by his saying, That the Heathens expected to be heard for their much speaking. It was the End of their prolix Supplications. They conceived that God was under an absolute Ne-

<sup>1</sup> 1 James i. 5.



Necessity of granting the Desire of their Hearts, as they took so much Pains and Trouble to lay before Him their Wants. Now, Believer, you can surely tell, whether, when you use vain REPETITIONS, you do it on Purpose to excite the Pity, and engage the especial Notice of JEHOVAH, or whether it is owing to the Smallness of your spiritual Gifts that leads you thus to repeat your Requests: If the latter is your Case, you are not of the Number, who are to be ranked with the Heathen; and therefore you may take just Encouragement, and conclude that you shall be heard as well as *Hezekiah*, who *chattered as a Crane or a Swallow*.<sup>1</sup>

But in the next Place you have a Model of Prayer given, which may greatly help you to form your Petitions, and shew you the Nature of this Duty: *But when you pray, say after this Manner, Our Father, &c.*

*Our Father.* Mistake not this Matter, Christian, as if Prayer was to be alone made to one Person in the adorable Trinity: Prayer is to be made to the whole Essence; but the Father is represented in the Order of Covenant, as the Object, *Jesus* as the Medium, and the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of Prayer. What Scripture, therefore, has given you a Guide

<sup>1</sup> *I/. xxxviii. 14.*

for, do not you attempt to confound, and so distress your own Soul. We address the Father, and in Him the whole Essence, as the great Author of Salvation.

*Who 'art in Heaven.* This is expressive of his Glory and Residence, and should be a Memento to us, what little Creatures we are when compared with the Infinite Supreme, who is represented as residing in Heaven, though He fills all Space, and no Limits can circumscribe his Glory and Greatness.

*Hallowed be thy Name.* This is to teach us, that it ought to be our constant Desire to glorify God, as it was the very End of our Creation; that to his Name all Honor is due, and ought with the profoundest Reverence to be paid.

*Thy Kingdom come.* This instructs us to pray for the spreading of the Gospel, and for the hastening of *Christ's* spiritual Kingdom, that the following gracious Promises may be fulfilled: *And the Kingdoms of the Earth shall become the Kingdoms of the Lord, and of his Christ.<sup>1</sup> For the Earth shall be full of the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea.<sup>2</sup>*

*Thy Will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven.* Here, the Submission that ought to grace our Petitions,

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xi. 15.    <sup>2</sup> Is. xi. 9.

and ornament our religious Characters, is set forth. This is a great Lesson to learn, truly to say, *Thy Will be done*, when Providences are adverse respecting us, and with Serenity and Composure of Mind, (not a stoical Apathy) submit to every Dispensation. But this is to be the constant Prayer of all true Believers in *Jesus*.

*Give us this Day our daily Bread.* This teacheth us to make continual Application to God for the Bestowment of all temporal Mercies, as Bread is expressive of the whole Support of Life. The Petition also instructs us, that we are ever to remember that the more common Blessings of Providence are to be alone expected in a Way of Duty.

*Forgive us our Trespases as we forgive them that trespass against us.* We ought always in our Prayers, stated and ejaculatory, to present this great Petition; especially as we are continually sinning against divine Grace and Mercy, for who liveth and sinneth not! Likewise as we pray, and expect Forgiveness of God for ourselves, so should we freely, and without Reserve, pardon the Injuries we receive at the Hands of our bitterest Enemies.

*Lead us not into Temptation.* We have much need to put up this Petition; not that the Lord leads us



into the Ways of Sin and evil Temptation. No, *Let no Man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth He any Man.*<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless they cannot be tempted without his Sovereign Permission. *Job* could not have been tried or tempted, had not the Lord granted a limited Power to *Satan*. Therefore, our Prayer should be, that if the Lord permit us to fall into the Way of Temptation, He would not leave us under the Temptation, as we must then necessarily become a Prey to the grand Enemy of Souls.

*But deliver us from Evil.* This Petition naturally flows from the former, and contains an ardent Desire to be delivered from becoming the unhappy Victim of our own Lusts, or of the Evil One, *who goeth about seeking whom he may devour.*<sup>2</sup>

*For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory.* This is an Ascription of Praise, with which we are taught Prayer, should be concluded, as it expresses our Pleasure in beholding the Glories of God, and our Desire that all Praise and Honor may be given to Him throughout the Ages of Eternity. To all which we should add, *Amen*; as an hearty and undissembled Proof of our Assent to the various Petitions we have been offering.

<sup>1</sup> *James* i. 13.

<sup>2</sup> *1 Pet.* v. 8.

This, Christian, is your Platform for Prayer : And although I have mentioned it under the Head of Closet Duty, yet it may serve as a Directory for Prayer in all its various Branches.

After what has been said, on the great Duty of Closet Prayer, must you not esteem it also as a Privilege ? Does it not fill you with holy Gratitude, that there are Seasons of secret Retirement in which you have frequently enjoyed the Divine Presence ; and had some sweet Foretastes of that eternal Blessedness which awaits your immortal Spirit, when Death shall have executed his solemn Commission ?

Are you not ready to say, upon a serious Review of the Matter, “ If the Taste is so sweet, what must the full Draught be ? If the Earnest is so transporting, what Glory must the full Possession afford ? If the View of Heaven by Faith, is so ravishing, what must the Fruition be ? Yea, if the Beauties of *Christ* appear so glorious at a Distance, what divine Pleasure must his immediate Presence produce ? Methinks I long for my Dismission : I think every Moment a Day until I behold his Excellence who is all my Hope, and eternally feast mine Eye with a full View of his complex Person, seated upon a Throne of unsullied Brightness.”

Patience, Christian, you are too precipitate in your Desires : You are not anxiously to wish for what the Lord is not pleased immediately to grant you. Let therefore your Prayer in Secret, and your Closet, rather be, “ Lord, give me Submission to thy Will ; suffer me not to repine at thy Providences : Thou, and Thou alone, knowest my appointed Time, which I cannot pass ; may I be enabled to wait for it with becoming Patience, and heartily say Amen to all thy Will respecting me.”

Reader, pause, and think of the sacred Pleasure such Seasons of Retirement in thy Closet must afford to thy frequently distressed Soul : Surely, then you will see the Necessity of attending closely to this Duty, --- therefore the urging any more Arguments in Favor thereof, I think would be Tautology, as I have aimed to prove it from Example, Profit, and Pleasure. — I now proceed to another special Duty of every Christian.

### *Of* SELF-EXAMINATION.

This is the Duty of every one who makes a public Profession of the Name of Christ ; who desires to be brought low before God, and wishes to see more of his own Vileness, that the Necessity of a Priest to atone, and an Intercessor to mediate in his Behalf, may appear more clearly ; and that he who sustains these



these truly glorious Characters, may be more highly exalted in his View.

I know many Persons dread Legality in this Exercise; and fear they shall be led to look for something of an Evidence in their own Minds, which they have no Right to expect will be revealed to them, --- that they may be thus inclined to lay some Foundation for Merit, or may place too much Confidence in the mere Performance of the Duty. Many such Objections they raise, in Opposition to this useful and necessary Duty of every Church Member. I acknowledge that where the Ground of the above Objections has an Existence, it is sinful; but surely a Misapprehension of the Duty by some, or the Abuse of it by others, are not Reasons sufficiently cogent to induce us to neglect such an Enquiry into our State and Experience, as Scripture both allows and enjoins.

The Advantages resulting from a devout Engagement in this Duty, have been frequently evinced in the delightful Seasons, those have experienced, who make Conscience of attending properly to it, previous to the preaching of the Word, the Administration of the Lord's Supper, or Baptism, when they have been going to surrender their little ones to Jehovah, in Covenant, as a God who promised his loving Kindness to *Abraham*, and his Seed (by Faith) for ever.

The

The Apostle *Paul* gives us the Ground of this Duty, when he exhorts the *Corinthians* to examine themselves, *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the Faith; prove your own selves.*<sup>1</sup> A Text full to the Point; and which clearly intimates the Necessity there was for the Church at *Corinth* to examine into the Matter of their Hope, and what Foundation they had for supposing themselves interested in the FAITH as is there expressed.

Indeed, the Apostle seems to have an Eye to the Duty of Persons to examine not only into their personal Hope; but likewise into the Foundation and Propriety of those Truths on which they professed to build that Hope. *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the Faith*: An Enquiry into the Foundation of which, it was their Duty then, and it is our Business now to make. --- This is a Matter greatly neglected in the present Day.

I do not mean, that it is indispensably necessary for every Believer, to be capable of critically investigating the various Points, in Divinity: By no Means. — But, as every Member of a Church professes a Form of sound Words, or of Truths, as the Basis of his Hope, it is certainly requisite that he be able to give, *a Reason of that Hope that is in him.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter iii. 15.

Especially, as by joining that Church, with which he is connected, he shews his Opinion to be, that they are formed in a spiritual Compact and Union, upon Scripture Authority and Evidence; and therefore it is indubitably his Duty to examine into the Foundation of that Authority and the Propriety of that Evidence. \* I already anticipate my Reader's Thoughts, who is thinking that an Enquiry into this Matter, ought rather to be the Business of every Person before he offers himself to any Church of *Christ*. — True it ought so to be! but how very many are there who enter into a Church Relation, by giving in what is termed their Experi-

\* It was my Design to have taken a general Review of all the Doctrines professed by a Gospel Church; and to have arranged them in such a Manner as that the Reader might at one View see both the Doctrines, and the Scriptures from which they are deduced; I still think it would be very useful and instructive; as thereby a Person of the meanest Capacity might be able to form such a Judgment of the Ground of the Doctrines he professes, as to be able to withstand the nicest Arts of Sophistry, and to prove to the keenest Deist, that he believes not without Evidence. — My Reason for not now publishing it is, the Fear of rendering this Piece too large; However, (if Life is spared) I purpose to add a Supplement of this Kind.

X

ence,



ence, and at the same Time know little of the Nature of those Doctrines in which they should also be united. Or, at most have but common Ideas of them, as Truths that have been in general insisted upon. — It was this Consideration, and the superficial Manner in which Persons, who desire to be proposed to different Churches, are frequently conversed with, that induced me to draw up the present Treatise. I would not be thought rigid, and needlessly particular, — but I had much rather lie under this Censure, than mutilate the Truth. Daily Experience will convince every one, who makes the Observation, that these are Facts, which cannot justly be controverted. — We ought to be consistent, and not awfully sport with the Truth: — It is because Numbers scarcely know what they believe, and much less what they profess, that those, who stile themselves, **RATIONAL DISSENTERS**, gain such Advantages; and I must own, though they have but little Right to that Character themselves, they have too good Grounds, in some Respects, to deny us the Appellation.

There is no such Thing as real Religion without a System of Truths. — I acknowledge, indeed, that many Persons reduce Religion to a *mere* System, discourse on divine Truths as they would in Mathematics, and exclude an experimental use of them from their own and others Breasts.

There

There are also others, who seem to detract from the Importance of Doctrines, and converse very indifferently concerning them; as if they were but of little Moment.—May we not suspect the Genuineness of such Persons' Christianity! Religion hath a divine Origin, and is agreeable to the Perfections of Deity. It is a consistent Scheme, and subservient to the eternal Interests of Mankind; consequently it is a rational Thing, and must have some solid Foundation for its Support, and that is no other than the Truths of the Gospel, which are here termed the Faith.

However some may act, it is your Business, Christian, to see you are not content with a mere System of Truths, in your Head or Memory, without an experimental Sense of them on your own Heart.

By the Charges the Apostle brought against the *Corinthians*, and the Manner in which the Chapter begins, from which I have quoted the Text, it seems as if an external Knowledge of the Truth had been deemed by them sufficient. *Examine yourselves whether ye be IN the Faith.* As if he had said, “Do not rest satisfied with a common Knowledge of what I have repeatedly instructed you in; but examine, see if you are IN the FAITH,

“ if you have an INTEREST in those Truths.  
 “ It is of the highest Consequence; and the  
 “ Thoughts of this, obliges me to renew my  
 “ Importunities, that you would forsake those  
 “ Practices and Ways, that give the Lie to your  
 “ Profession. Remember, he adds, *this is the third*  
 “ *Time I am coming to you. In the Mouth of*  
 “ *two or three Witnesses shall every Word be esta-*  
 “ *blished.*”

In this Address, we have a Picture of some of  
 a direct opposite Character to those just men-  
 tioned: Many, like these *Corinthians*, esteem it suffi-  
 cient for them, to be able to give an Account of  
 the Doctrines they profess; while others boast of  
 their Experience and Feelings, without Knowledge;  
 and thus the Truth, as to its Evidence (not as  
 to its Essence) becomes materially injured by them  
 both.

Believer, it is of the greatest Importance to you, to  
 know whether you are interested in those Truths you  
 publicly profess to believe, and which you regard  
 as the Foundation of your Hope, since the Apostle  
 so pathetically enjoined the *Corinthians* to examine  
 whether they were IN the Faith. Methinks I hear  
 you say, “ How shall I know whether I am IN the

1 2 Cor. xiii. 1.

“ Faith;



“ Faith ; or in other Words, whether I am interested in the Truths of the Gospel ? ” The inspired Author furnishes us with an Answer, *Know you not that Jesus Christ be in you, except you be Reprobates.* That is to say, *Christ* the Lord, the Redeemer, has taken Possession of that Man or that Woman, as his Purchase, who *with the Heart believes unto Righteousness.*<sup>1</sup> They are not Reprobates ; or those on whom the Lord, in his Sovereignty, has not bestowed efficacious Grace. Hence, the Conclusion naturally to be drawn, is, that those whom the Lord *Jesus* hath purchased with his Blood, will not, cannot live in the constant Practice of Sin : They heartily abhor it, both for the Contrariety of its Nature to that of God’s Holiness, and the tremendous Effects it produces to the Soul’s spiritual Hurt. As if the Apostle had thus spoken ; “ My *Corinthian* Friends, I hear of the many Vices and growing Evils that abound among you ; these are contrary to the Fruits you ought to bear ; I therefore pray, that you would no longer deceive your own Souls ; examine and see whether you have any Evidence of being included in the Faith of God’s Elect. For know you not, that *Christ* dwelleth not in them who are Reprobates ; and surely you will not say, nor do you believe, that those Works you have been doing, are consonant with the Character of any but Reprobates ; Therefore *Examine yourselves whether ye be in the Faith.*”

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x. 10.

As

As this was the Advice of an Apostle, whose Experience in divine Things, will be readily allowed to be superior to that of common Believers, I think it should have some Weight and Credit with us. He, no doubt, found the Usefulness of this Exercise for his own Soul, otherwise he would not have enjoined his Hearers to attend thereto. When ever I read this Text, I confess I am at a Loss to know how those, who are Enemies to this Duty, or neglect it, for Reasons before-mentioned, can free their Minds from many Difficulties that must occur to their Reflection. But I leave them to God and their own Consciences.

*Examine yourselves, &c.* The very Phraseology of this Address expresses the Importance of the Duty, I wish to inculcate. The inspired Penman, sensible of the vain and trifling Manner in which many Professors acted, who seemed contented with a mere shew of Religion, — the Name being of more Consequence to them than the Thing — and the Flash of a religious Appearance, more than the pleasing experimental Sense of divine Truths, could not avoid giving this holy Exhortation.

Having in a plain and familiar Manner, aimed to illustrate the Apostle's Exhortation, in Connection with the Context, I shall now reduce these

these Particulars to Practice and Experience; and may what is penned be attended with a divine Blessing!

I. In the general, examine into the Ends you propose to yourself by maintaining a public Profession. As,

1. Do you maintain a public Profession of Religion with a View to obtain larger Connections in worldly Business; or merely to gain the Approbation and Applause of the professing World. However awful such Views are, the Event has too often verified them in the Conduct of many Church Members; and those who have had much Transaction with the professing World, know them to their Soul's Grief.

One or other of these Views seems to have actuated *Simon Magus* to apply to the Apostles for the Gifts of the Holy Ghost. *And when Simon saw, that through the laying on of the Apostles Hands the Holy Ghost was given to them, he offered them Money, saying, give me also this Power, that on whomsoever I lay Hands he may receive the Holy Ghost.*<sup>1</sup> As Simon had been guilty of all Manner of Sorceries, previous to his Offer of joining the Apostles, and had thereby obtained great Credit among the People; *For to him they*

<sup>1</sup> *Acts* viii. 18, 19.



all gave Heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, *This Man is the great Power of God,*<sup>1</sup> he probably might aim to procure large Sums of Money, and so promote his temporal Interest—But finding the Apostles Doctrine, to be attended with a Divine Influence, and gain Ground, while his lying Wonders were likely to lose their Importance, he essayed to join himself to the Apostles, whose Miracles filled him with Astonishment: By this Means it is probable, he purposed to support himself in the good Opinion of the People, and still retain his Power over their Judgments. That he might the more effectually accomplish these Ends, he offered to purchase their Gifts of the Holy Ghost,<sup>2</sup> which, could he have received, would, in his Opinion, have made him appear of superior Consequence, to his Rivals *Philip and Peter.*

That his Offer of joining the Apostles was with a View to worldly Interest, I think is evident, from the bare Relation: No Man would have joined the Apostles, or offered to purchase their Gifts, without having some Ends to answer thereby; and that *Simon* had no View to glorify God, the grand End for which the Holy Ghost was poured out upon Individuals, is manifest from the severe and truly striking Reproof of *Peter.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ver. 10.    <sup>2</sup> Ver. 18.    <sup>3</sup> Ver. 20, 24.

This Matter, Reader, may well call for your serious Regard: Was it from a View to your worldly Interest that you joined yourself to a Christian Church? Or was it for higher and more noble Ends? If the latter, may God have all the Glory; if the former, and you have never been led to reflect upon it with that Seriousness it requires, I pray God you may now be honest to your own Conscience, and delay not a Moment to implore Forgiveness, as the Apostle says in the fore-cited Verse, *if perhaps the Thought of thine Heart may be forgiven thee.*

2. Was it to cover any evil Practices, or bad Designs, that you ventured to appear in a religious Dress, making a public Profession? This is, if possible, a worse End than the former; since it makes the Name, Ordinances, and Institutions of *Christ* subservient to the basest Purpose.

This awful Character is strikingly represented in that solemn Reproof our Lord gave to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, who under Pretence of Religion, and in the most dreadful Mask of Hypocrisy, supported the greatest Scenes of Iniquity. *Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites! for ye devour Widows Houses, and for a Pretence make long Prayers; therefore ye shall receive the greater Condemnation.*

• Matt. xxiii. 14.

X

I sup.

I suppose that the deepest-laid Schemes, the most horrid Machinations and cursed Designs upon Persons, Families, and States, have been more effectually executed under the specious Appearance of Religion, than by any other Means.

The Character of *Judas* will serve more fully to shew the Baseness of this End of appearing religious; and the very pungent Reflection cast upon him by the sacred Historian, stands as a solemn Warning to all who profess a Love to *Christ*, with no higher View, than to secrete their sinful Practices. *Judas*, it is said, was intrusted with the Bag, and when *Mary* came, and as an Expression of her Love to *Christ*, anointed his Feet, the covetous Spirit of *Judas* was enraged, and under a false and pretended Concern for the necessitous among the Jews, cries, *Why was not this Ointment sold for three hundred Pence and given to the Poor.*<sup>1</sup> Upon which it is immediately added, *Not that he cared for the Poor, but because he was a Thief.*<sup>2</sup> — Indeed, the whole of his Profession, appears to have been made with no other View than more completely to perpetrate his base Designs; hence, that dissembling Kiss with which he betrayed the Saviour into the Hands of his Enemies, and for which he received thirty Pieces of Silver.

<sup>1</sup> *John* xii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ker.* vi.



Christian Reader, does the Character of the hungry Scribes, or that of covetous *Judas* suit thee? Are either of them applicable to the Disposition of thy Mind? — Be faithful to thy Conscience. — It is of no small or indifferent Consequence, and a Mistake here, is truly stumbling at the very Threshold. The Lord delights not in those who present their Bodies, as a Sacrifice, when their Hearts are knit to the World, and have no Share in the Oblations they profess to offer to Him; nay, so far from it, that they only use their most solemn Engagements, for the End of veiling their wicked Purposes. In the Church of *Christ* there have been always found some such; and it is frequently impossible (as we know not each others Hearts) to discover, or detect such a presuming Hypocrite.

But if this Piece should fall into the Hands of any such, my earnest Prayer is, that they may review the Examples I have produced, and tremble at the Consequence of dying in such a State. *Judas*, it is said, hanged himself — had that been all, it would have been happy for him; but we have too just Grounds to suppose that he is going among those miserable Spirits, who never more will feel the pleasing Sensation of Hope, but be as wretched as an avenging God is pleased to make them.

The other Disciples of *Christ* little suspected, that *Judas* their Friend and Companion, was so despicable a Character, 'till the End proved it; and so in the Church to which you belong, there may be some such Members; but do not consider them, turn into your own Bosom, reflect upon your own Conduct, and see whether you answer the Description; may the Divine Spirit, assist you in your serious Examinations; and in order to succeed, have Recourse to Prayer, the only Way in which you can reasonably expect to receive a Blessing.

II. Examine into the Experience you have of divine Things.

As you have made a Profession of the Name of *Christ*, it is to be supposed, you have done it from a real Conviction of the Importance of being interested in what *Christ* has done and suffered, and that you have had some Ground to hope for Pardon and eternal Life through Him. — It is therefore of no small Consequence, for you to enquire what is that Degree of Experience; that by the Grace of God, you may be happily enabled to press on to know the Lord. — And in general;

Do you know what it is to have passed from Death unto Life; to be translated out of the Kingdom of Darkness into the Kingdom of marvellous Light?

It

It is impossible, (I would speak very tenderly, though faithfully upon this Subject) for a Person to experience a divine Change upon his Heart, and live any considerable Time ignorant of it. It is true, a Person, through the Power of Unbelief, and the prevailing Force of Corruption, may at Times, be at a Loss to discern his Interest in the Lord *Jefus Christ*; but has the Holy Spirit effected a glorious Change on the Heart of a Sinner? — Has He bowed his stubborn Will? — illumined his dark Understanding, and renovated all the Powers of his Soul? In Consequence of which, hath he a different Object, and are his Views directed to different Ends from what they formerly were, and he yet remain insensible of the divine Work. Surely not! For as in all perfect natural Births, there is every Sign of vital Life, Sight, Hearing, &c. so it is in Regeneration; and no Person having either of these Faculties can be insensible of them. As the various Faculties of natural Life, grow stronger and stronger until they arrive to their designed Perfection, so the spiritual Faculties in the new Life, increase in a certain Proportion to the Experience of the Christian. Regeneration is indeed a secret Work. *The Wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the Sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither*

it



*it goeth: So is every one that is born of the Spirit.<sup>1</sup>*

But though thus secret with Respect to its Nature, it is not so as to its Effects — And, therefore if you have experienced a divine Change; if you really know what it is to have passed from Death unto Life, you will find some Propriety in the following Questions; and by attending to which, you may be helped, by God's Blessing, more clearly to ascertain your State.

I. Do you feel a GROWING HATRED to SIN?

Whenever you reflect upon Sin, does it appear truly odious to you? Are you desirous of being delivered not only from the Demerits of Sin, but from the reigning Power of it? Do you ever put up with the Psalmist, that Petition, *Cleanse thou me from secret Faults.*<sup>2</sup> Do you rejoice in the Apostle's Declaration, that Sin shall not have Dominion over you? Or is Sin a light Thing with you? If it is, suspect your own Heart; for *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit Sin;*<sup>3</sup> that is, does not deliberately and habitually commit Sin. How should he? if he is born of God, then he becomes dead to Sin; and the Apostle's Reasoning is truly emphatical, *How*

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Psal. xix. 12.

<sup>3</sup> 1 John viii. 9.  
*shall*

*shall we that are dead to Sin, live any longer therein.<sup>1</sup> It is impossible. For the Grace of God teacheth us to deny all Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World.<sup>2</sup>*

2. Do you experience an INCREASING LOVE to HOLINESS?

God is a holy God, and he can delight in nothing but what is holy; and it is for this very End He hath created us in *Christ Jesus, unto good Works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them;*<sup>3</sup> *God hath not called us unto Uncleaness, but unto Holiness.*<sup>4</sup> Now if you are really born of God, you will delight in what God delights, and every Thing which is opposite to that Purity of Life and Conversation which ought to adorn your Profession as a Member of *Christ's* visible Church, will be truly disgustful to you. — Reader, you can certainly tell whether Sin or Holiness affords you most Pleasure. Some have been distressed with groundless Fears upon this Head, and have been hastily inclined to set themselves down as notorious Hypocrites, because through the Prevalency of Corruption and the Degeneracy of the human Heart, they frequently feel the Force of unruly Passions, and the Power of those inordinate Desires, which they know from

<sup>1</sup> *Rom. vi. 2.*

<sup>2</sup> *Titus ii. 12.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ephes. ii. 10.*

<sup>4</sup> *1 Thess. iv. 7.*

Scripture to be contrary to the Mind of *Christ*; and therefore conclude that Sin is the most beloved by them. But this is wrong; it is the prevailing Disposition of the Mind, that constitutes the Criterion by which you may be helped to determine your State. The ingenious Dr. *Doddridge* observes “ To be regenerate, and to be born of God, are in Scripture, *Terms of the same Import*; and consequently, that whatever *Temper* and *Disposition* is in Scripture declared to be *inconsistent* with the Character of a *Child of God*, must necessarily denominate a Man an unregenerate Person.”

If you have an increasing Love to Holiness, Holiness will be your prevailing Principle; and if you fall by any awful Temptation, you will find it make sore Work for Repentance.

### 3. Do you experience a HEARTY LOVE to GOD'S PEOPLE?

By this, says the Apostle, *we know that we have passed from Death unto Life, because we love the Brethren.*<sup>1</sup> Those who are of a similar Disposition, will delight in each other, and will most associate together. It is therefore no wonder that those who

<sup>1</sup> 1 John iii. 14.

have



have tasted *that the Lord is gracious*,<sup>1</sup> should disapprove of the Company of true Christians ; since they cannot delight in them, unless they could delight in what is directly opposite to their Wishes. — But, Christian, if such you are, you will love the People of God, and embrace every proper Season to be in their Company. — You will seek Instruction and Comfort at their Lips, and rejoice in every Measure that may be adopted to promote their, as well as your own spiritual Interest.

I would not be understood as inculcating the Duty of Love to God's People only ; No ! The real Christian should cherish, and will manifest Benevolence to the Persons, and a Zeal for the eternal Interests of all Mankind ; while he hath a holy Displeasure against their Errors and evil Works, he will endeavour to promote their Happiness. — *Beloved*, (says the Apostle John ) *let us love one another, for Love is of God, and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God.*<sup>2</sup>

4. Does it revive your Heart to hear that Conversion Work goes forward, and that many are called from Darknefs into marvellous Light. — It is said, *There is rejoicing in Heaven over one Sinner that re-*

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John iv. 7.

*pentetish, more than ninety and nine just Persons that need no Repentance.*<sup>1</sup> When you have heard (what is the Experience of many) that one or more of your former Acquaintances with whom you were particularly intimate; — in whose Company you have murdered so much precious Time, indulged loose Desires, and gratified your corrupt Affections; — that such are *plucked as Brands from the burning,*<sup>2</sup> and made to know, believe, and rejoice in the adorable Saviour, does it not fill you with inexpressible Joy. — If a true Christian, you will experience a Pleasure that cannot be described by Language; but which, if you are not, you will be at a total Loss to understand.

Oh! the sublime Pleasure that arises in the Mind of a real Believer, from a Consideration of his former Intimates laying down the Weapons of their Hostility; — when the Language of their Hearts is changed from saying, *Who will shew us any Good,* to *Oh! Lord, lift Thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon us,*<sup>3</sup> — from, *I will not that this Man should reign over me,*<sup>4</sup> to *Not my Will, but thy Will be done.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luke xv. 7.<sup>2</sup> Zech. iii. 2.<sup>3</sup> Psal. iv. 6.<sup>4</sup> Luke xix. 14.<sup>5</sup> Luke xxii. 42.

5. Do you desire to make greater Progress in the divine Life? or, are you content with the Grace which you suppose yourself to have received? — The former alone will decide in your Favor as a Christian. — Those who are truly taught of God, will be constantly desirous that their Path may be like *the shining Light that shineth more and more unto the perfect Day*;\* and being persuaded with the Apostle they have not *already attained, or are already perfect*; they follow after, *if that they may apprehend that, for which also they are apprehended of Christ Jesus*.<sup>2</sup> It is impossible it should be otherways: For he that knows most of God, wishes to know more, — and therefore no Degrees of Grace can satiate the ardent Desires of an heaven-born Soul, 'till he arrives to a State of Perfection in Glory, --- when he shall see as he is seen, and know as he is known. Reader, is this thy Experience, or art thou totally indifferent about this great and truly important Enquiry? — Continue not so; but earnestly pray to God that you may be enabled to *press forward towards the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus*.<sup>3</sup>

6. Do you feel a strong Opposition to the Power of indwelling Corruptions? — Do you know what it is to be in such a Frame as the Apostle was, when he said, *Oh! wretched Man that I am, who*

\* *Prov.* iv. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Phil.* iii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> *Phil.* iii. 14.



*shall deliver me from this Body of Death.*<sup>1</sup> If you are truly born from above, this will be a Part of your Experience. There is no such Thing as a Man's being savingly taught of God, and yet ignorant of the natural Corruption of his Heart, — and wherever there is a proper Knowledge of which, there must of Necessity be very fore Conflicts. — The Opposition will be strong; for the Enemy of Souls well knows that whenever a Man is so far instructed by the good Spirit of God, as to be in any Measure acquainted with his own natural Pollution, that he is then near losing a Subject; and he accordingly assaults him with the utmost Violence and Rage. I do not mean that this must be constantly the Case; or that as a Believer, you must always feel a proportionate Part of this spiritual Opposition. No! but that if you are born of God, you are not utterly ignorant of this Part of Christian Experience. It is true, sometimes by the Grace of God, and his Love shed abroad in our Hearts, we may know what it is to rest for a short Space from the Violence of the Attack. — But this will not continue long. --- We shall soon feel that *the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh; and that these are contrary the one to the other, so that we cannot do the Things that we would.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vii: 24;<sup>2</sup> Gal. v. 17.

7. Do you find that the Pleasures or Emoluments of the World are not Objects worthy of your chief Pursuit or Possession. *Where your Treasure is, there will your Heart be also.*<sup>1</sup> If your Mind is disposed towards Heaven and heavenly Objects, then the World will be indifferent to you: Not that Religion makes a Man an unsociable or unfriendly Being; it only moderates his earthly Desires; and instead of suffering the World to be his Resting place, makes it his Footstool. He treads on all carnal Things, and esteems them highly unfit for his Attention, any farther than as they are subservient either to the Glory of God, or the Promotion of his spiritual Kingdom. The Apostle *John* avers, that *whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the World*;<sup>2</sup> And *Paul* declares in his Epistle to the Galatians, *The World was crucified unto him, and he unto the World*.<sup>3</sup> So that all who have experienced a saving Change, will feel, more or less, a Desire to have their Affections weaned from the World; knowing that here they have *no continuing City*, and so *seek one to come*.<sup>4</sup> If you are truly dead to the World, and *if you be risen with Christ, then you will seek those Things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right Hand of God*.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Matt. vi. 21.*<sup>2</sup> *John v. 4.*<sup>3</sup> *Gal. vi. 14.*<sup>4</sup> *Heb. xiii. 14.*<sup>5</sup> *Col. 3. 1.*

8. Do you wish for nearer and longer Communion with God? --- Can you say with the Psalmist, *As the Hart panteth after the Water Brooks, so panteth my Soul after Thee, O God!*<sup>1</sup> Is He the principal Object of your Delight? and do you wish Him to manifest himself more and more unto your Soul as He does not unto the World.<sup>2</sup> Do you find yourself unhappy without a Smile from his Countenance, or the Manifestation of his spiritual Presence in the Ordinances of his Appointment? Does his Absence grieve and distress you? — Can you sing with the ingenious Dr. *Watts*.

I cannot bear thine Absence, Lord,  
My Life expires if Thou depart;  
Be thou, my Heart, still near my God,  
And Thou, my God, still near my Heart.

I was not born for Earth or Sin,  
Nor can I live on Things so vile;  
Yet I will stay my Father's Time,  
And hope and wait for Heaven awhile.

Then, dearest Lord in thine Embrace,  
Let me resign my fleeting Breath;  
And with a Smile upon my Face,  
Pass the important Hour of Death.

<sup>1</sup> *Psal.* xlii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *John* xiv. 21.



.. If you are born of God, you will experience an universal Change in your Mind; you will have new Apprehensions concerning God and yourself, *The World by Wisdom knew not God.*<sup>1</sup> You will have new Affections; whereas you were once *Lovers of Pleasures more than Lovers of God,*<sup>2</sup> now you can say with the Apostle Paul, *I count all Things but Loss for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, and do count them but Dung that I may win Christ.*<sup>3</sup> You will have new Desires. --- Once you were wishing to gratify carnal Appetites; *In Time past ye walked according to the Course of this World, according to the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that now worketh in the Children of Disobedience;*<sup>4</sup> but now your Prayer is to *know Him and the Power of His Resurrection, and the Fellowship of His Sufferings, being made conformable unto his Death.*<sup>5</sup> You will have new Joys. --- Once you delighted only in worldly Pleasures, but now you rejoice in *Christ*, and joy in the God of your Salvation. --- You will have new Fears. --- Once you felt, when under any solemn Providence, a servile slavish Fear; but now you fear to offend, from the pure Principle of Love. --- In a Word, you will have new Sorrows, new Determinations, new Views, new Employ, new Entertainments, and new Pur-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 21.<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 4.<sup>3</sup> Phil. iii. 8.<sup>4</sup> Ephes. ii. 2.<sup>5</sup> Phil. iii. 10.

suits;

suits; and I might add, by this Change, you will have new Friends and new Enemies.

And now, Christian Reader, what think you of these Things? Are they not worthy your most serious Attention? Have you been applying them to yourself as you read? Have you offered up such an ejaculatory Petition to God, as, "O Lord, assist me to examine faithfully into my own Heart, and see whether I bear the Marks of thy Children. Open Thou mine Understanding to discern thy Law, and enable me, to walk as becometh the Gospel of *Christ*, in all Holiness and Purity of Conversation." If this has been thy earnest Prayer to God, He will not disappoint thy praying Heart, for never did He say unto the Seed of Jacob, *Seek ye Me, in vain.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Isa.* xlv. 19.

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A  
SHORT ADDRESS

TO SUCH

Who intend entering into COMMUNION

WITH A

GOSPEL CHURCH.

*Count up the Cost. — Luke xiv. 28.*

**A**LL who publicly profess the Name of *Christ*, and consequently are peculiarly enjoined *to depart from all Iniquity*,<sup>\*</sup> should be constantly concerned so to conduct themselves in Life, as not to bring a Scandal on the Profession they make, nor wound their own Consciences, nor give the Enemies of *Christ* and His Kingdom, any Room to blaspheme.

<sup>\*</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 19.

A 2

The



The inconsistent Walk and Conversation of many Professors has been more fatal to the Cause of Religion, and more destructive of the real Believer's Peace, than all the bitter Invectives and indefatigable Attempts of the most notorious Opponents of Christianity. And many Persons, who have been sensibly touched with Conviction of their Sin and Misery, and have been inclined to take up Arms against Sin and Satan, and publicly avow their Determination to be no longer the Slaves of Darkness, have frequently been humbled and kept from their immediate Designs, by the irregular Behavior of those whom they have known long to profess the Gospel.

As this is indisputable, it behoves Persons to weigh well what they are engaging in, when about to make a public Profession of the Name of *Christ*, of their Faith in his Blood, and of their sole Dependence on his perfect Obedience for Pardon and Justification. — It appears that there were Persons rash, and inconsiderate in our Lord's Time. The all-wise, all-knowing Saviour, from whose pervading Eye, no Secret can be obscured, saw their Rashness, and reprov'd their Folly, in those striking parabolical Representations of a King who goeth to War, and of the Builder of a House. *Count up the Cost*, said the infinite, compassionate Redeemer,

lest

*lest all who behold the Building, should begin to mock, saying, This Man began to build, and was not able to finish.* — As if He had said, “ Consider well, my Disciples, what it will cost you to follow me faithfully: Remember that no exalted Names, lofty Characters, personal Gratifications, and earthly Emoluments, must be suffered to stand in Competition with my Kingdom: — No Fear of Calumny, Reproach, Ignominy, Shame, Persecution or Punishment, must induce you to deny a Knowledge of my Person, or a Profession of my Doctrine: — No ill-natured Frowns, sarcastic Sneers, evil Suspicions, or malevolent Aspersions, must have sufficient Weight with you, to prevent your Perseverance in my Interest, or to retard your Progress in the Christian Warfare. — Remember all these Things. Count up the Cost; see whether you can chearfully be at this Expence, to follow Me; for, consider, if after you have declared yourselves to be my Disciples, and to admire and adhere to my Doctrine, you should repent and decline, what will the mocking World say? Will they not triumph over you, and with Contempt add, *This Man began to build, and was not able to finish.*”

<sup>3</sup> Luke xiv. 30.

A a 2

Such

Such who desire to act conscientiously, and as always under the immediate Inspection of God, should, previous to their more public Profession of Godliness, weigh well their Situation in Life, their Connections in Business, and the different Engagements they are frequently called to enter into; whether they can consistently abide in their Situations, retain their Connections, and continue to support these Engagements; and at the same Time, be able to maintain the Purity of their Profession. — For it is well known, however we may strive to evade it, that there are some Situations, Connections, and Engagements, which cannot be continued in, while we profess to believe in the Lord *Jesus Christ*, and desire to be saved in a Way of Holiness. Therefore, if Professors really wish to live to the Honor of *Christ*, and be an Ornament to the Profession they make of His Name, they must renounce every Thing, however profitable and pleasant it may be, that is incompatible with the Holiness of *Christ's* Kingdom, or that suits not with the Nature of divine Communion.

Perhaps some may imagine, I am laying many unnecessary Difficulties in the Way of Professors; and that I am starting such Things, as may be a Means of preventing Persons from adopting the  
holy



holy Resolution of *Joshua*, and saying, *As for me and my House we will serve the Lord.*<sup>1</sup> To such Persons, I beg Leave to suggest, that I am far from intimidating tender Minds; or from throwing such Difficulties before them as should prevent them following their divine Master. — Consider, in whose Strength all these Things are to be done, and by whose divine Aid, every pious Resolution should be entered into. In the Strength of *Jesus*, and by the gracious Influences of the Holy Spirit, can we alone act with Credit to our Redeemer's Interest; and therefore all who love *Christ*, and who desire thus to magnify the Riches of divine Grace, will be much in Prayer, and constantly crying to the Almighty Spirit for his merciful and unerring Directions.

As I have before given a particular View of the special Privilege and Duty of Prayer, in its various Branches, I shall not particularly enlarge upon it here; only in general observe, that all true Christians knowing their own Inability to support themselves from falling, and their Incapacity to act with suitable Honor to their sacred Vocation, without divine Assistance, will necessarily be much engaged in Prayer; Prayer is certainly the best and most formidable Weapon

<sup>1</sup> *Joshua*, xxiv. 15.

to oppose our Grand Enemy, to repel his Darts, to quench the Fire of Corruptions, and *to come off more than Conquerors*; <sup>1</sup> *through Him that hath loved us, and given Himself for us.* <sup>2</sup>

When Professors live without Prayer, we may estimate their Profession of no Value. — I could as soon, and as rationally suppose a Man might live without the natural Air, as I could persuade myself that a Man may be a real Christian, and yet live in Neglect of that Duty. — From this Consideration, our old Divines have, with the greatest Propriety, stiled Prayer the “first Breath of the new-born Soul.” — Is it possible to be other-ways? Can I see that I was once a poor miserable Wretch without Hope, and without God in the World, and that dying in that State, I must have been inevitably lost to all Eternity; and not bend before the Throne of God, and with Earnestness supplicate the Lord, as he has been pleased to call me by His Grace, to support me by his Power? Do I now see that lest one Moment to myself I shall fall a Victim to my Lusts, and not pray for Grace to subdue their Power? — Or, am I fully convinced that the Adversary *goeth about seeking whom he may devour*, and not implore Direction

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Ephes. v. 2.

to escape his Wiles, Strength to resist his Temptations, and Wisdom to answer his horrid Injections — Impossible!

As these Things must be allowed by every reflecting Mind, when maturely considered, it behoves all Persons who profess Christianity, not only thus to act in order to the Peace of their own Minds, but that they may evidence to the surrounding World, that they are truly the Followers of the Lamb, and of those, who thro' Faith and Patience will e're long, inherit the Promises. It is not for Christians to secrete their Profession, no more than to boast of it with Ostentation. — One Man should not plead Poverty when in Affluence, under the Sanction of Humility, nor another pride himself upon the Riches which Providence bestows, in order to appear magnificent. — There should always be a Medium prudently observed. — He that loves the Ways of God, and aspires to spread forth his Glory, while on the one Hand he desires not to make a vain or pompous Shew of Religion, so on the other, he chooses to discover so much of his Hatred to Sin, Love to Holiness, and delight in the Enjoyment of God, that those who are as Spies upon his Conduct, stand who wait for his halting, may be even allu-

red



red by the Purity of his Walk, to admire the Greatness of divine Love, and the unequalled Beauties of Grace and Faith in their pleasing Exercises. — As Lights upon a Hill, or an Eminence, should Believers shine to their Father's Praise. — *No Man, said the gracious Redeemer, when he lighteth a Candle, putteth it under a Bushel.*<sup>1</sup> No surely, for if a Person so acts, we must suppose him either to be ashamed of what he does, or unwilling openly to avow his Desire to be the Lord's, and to be devoted to his peculiar Service.

This was not the Conduct of *Joshua*, the typical Saviour and Leader of *Israel*. For he with a becoming Magnanimity of Soul, summoned the People together, from the highest Elders of the Tribes, to the lowest among them, before him;<sup>2</sup> and after having recapitulated the Mercies of God in Covenant towards them, with his Heart full of Gratitude, he cheerfully declared his noble Resolution to serve the God of their Fathers. — What was the Consequence? Why, the People struck with his pious Declaration, instantly acknowledged their Readiness to join with him in that most reasonable Service. —

<sup>1</sup> *Matt. v. 15.*

<sup>2</sup> *Joshua xxiv. 1.*

I cannot help observing, the gracious Pleasure of God in not calling us to believe without Evidence. By his Servant *Joshua*, he declared to the People what he had already wrought; and laid such indisputable Proofs before them, that he was infinitely superior in Wisdom and Power to the Gods they served on the other Side of the Flood, or to those of the *Amorites*, in whose Land they dwelt, that they could not withstand the Strength of the Evidence thus given them.

Likewise good *Josiah* who succeeded wicked *Amon* his Father, when he came to the Throne, immediately gave Orders for the Demolition of the prophane Temples, and their senseless Idols, and the utter Extirpation of their idolatrous Worship. — After this bold and intrepid Step to crush the Errors and damnable Heresies that had crept in among the People, notwithstanding the unhappy Revolt, had been nearly universal in *Jerusalem*, yet the People were so awed and influenced by his pious Example, that when the Law was found and read to them by the King himself, they made not the least Opposition to his Pleasure. The Conclusion of the Chapter in which we have this Relation given, affords us the highest Encouragement to be bold in the Redeemer's Cause, and always openly avow our Christian Profession: for it is said, they

*Departed not all his Days, from following the Lord,  
the God of their Fathers:*

Thus we plainly see, that while on the one Hand, Persons ought to weigh well the Importance of entering into Church Communion, and count up the Cost; lest they should afterwards find the Expence too heavy, and be induced to renounce their Profession, and thereby disgrace their religious Character, wound the Cause of *Christ* in the World, and expose themselves to the avenging Hand of Omnipotence; — Yet, on the other, they should not refrain joining themselves to a Church, or spiritually incorporated Body; since by a Neglect Hereof, they deprive themselves of many great and precious Privileges, which are peculiarly annexed to such religious Societies.

How any Person, whose Mind hath been impressed with a Sense of divine Things, can refuse to enter into Church Communion! which in Fact is refusing to comply with the Command of *Christ*, to commemorate his Death, I am at a total Loss to account for. All reasonable Allowance is to be made for a tender Conscience, (which is one of the greatest Blessings we can experience) but at the same Time, what is an absolute Com-

2 Chron. xxxiv. 33.

mand



mand of *Christ*, in one Case, should be as conscientiously observed, as in another. When he says, *Do this in Remembrance of me,*<sup>1</sup> it is as much our Duty (if we have a good Hope through Grace of being converted Persons) to obey that divine Order, as it is to regard, and pay Obedience to the Command, *Thou shalt have no other Gods before me;*<sup>2</sup> and until Persons can divest the Injunction, of even its Appearance as a Command, it must recoil with Shame and Grief upon their Minds in every Season of serious Reflection.

Christian Reader, let me here request your Attention to what has been offered. — Reflect with Carefulness on these plain Hints. — Avoid each Extreme. — Presume not, on one Hand, — Delay not, on the other. But let all be done with a single Eye to the Glory of God, *And when Christ who is your Life, shall appear, ye also shall appear with him in Glory.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Luke* xxii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Exod.* xx. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Col.* iii. 4.

F I N I S:

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Christian's mind, for we have repeatedly seen, that  
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 single Eye to the Glory of God, and the  
 soul is seen in the light of the Father's countenance  
 him into Glory.

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The READER is requested to correct the following

E R R A T A.

Page 26, Line 12, for of read of. p. 61. l. 28, for Uzziah,  
r. Uzzah. p. 62, l. 6, ditto. p. 91. l. 10. for a Mem-  
ber's, r. The Persons. p. ditto, l. 20, for their Brethren  
r. those proposed for Admission. p. 97, l. 4. for Refomed,  
r. Reformed. p. 118, l. 8. for observed, r. attend. p.  
169, l. 1, for have tasted, r. have not tasted.

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